

LETTERS OF  
RIGHT HONOURABLE  
V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI  
P.C., C.H., LL.D., D.LITT.

WITH  
SOME LETTERS OF RT. HON. E. S. MONTAGU  
AND GANDHI-SASTRI CORRESPONDENCE

EDITED BY

T. N. JAGADISAN

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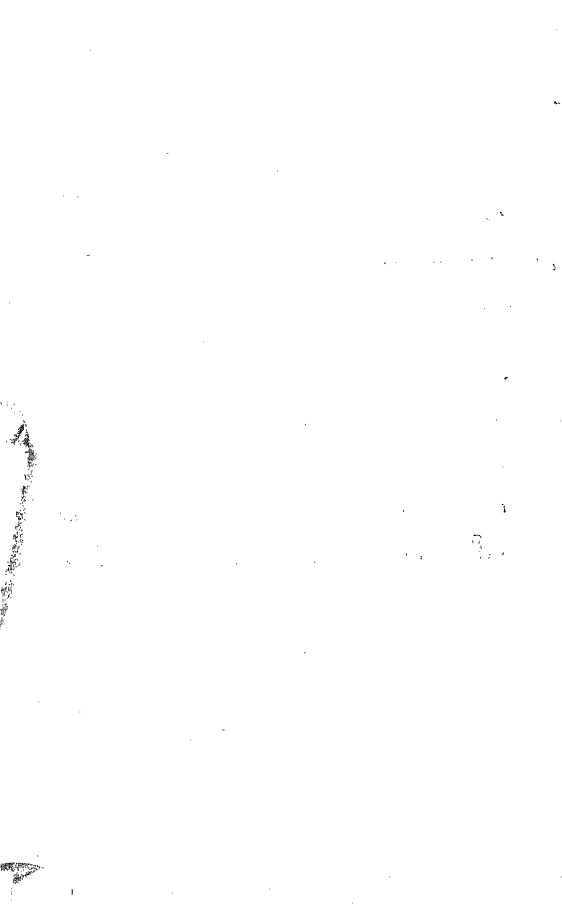
DEDICATED TO  
T. R. VENKATARAMA SASTRI





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## PREFACE

The Right Honourable V. S. Srinivasa Sastri is one of the world's greatest orators. But unlike Burke whose letters read like speeches, Mr Sastri is a master in the art of letter-writing. His friends know that even a post-card with a few lines from his pen is a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. He achieves freshness in every letter he writes.

A certain pure engagingness is the quality of Mr Sastri's letters. Politics and personalities figure in them and these are sources of the highest interest. But the secret of their attraction is an indefinable charm of writing all its own. An effortless manner, the happy ease of a style that is neither diffident nor ostentatious, is certainly one of the ingredients of the charm. The unmistakable glow of human warmth born of a real capacity for friendship is another. The keen and lofty intellectuality of the brain at the back of these letters is a third ingredient. The letters compel our surrender to a personality who excels in the creation of character, incident, attitude and style. But the tender beauty and fragile charm of a good letter will not bear analysis. What, for instance, are we to say of our enjoyment of the little letters of thanks on pages 278—280 to Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar? They are a joy, but in substance they are nothing, less than nothing. Here is true epistolary art, an art that pleases without taxing our thought or straining our moral sense. It is in such little marvels of sentiment and style that we witness the born letter-writer in Mr Sastri; and the longer letters gain in their

character as letters only in so far as the intangible beauty of the 'pure' letter (which is a social act, a gesture of friendship, a testament of affection) mingles with the more substantial fare. Among the most formal of the letters in this collection are the two written to Ramsay MacDonald, but even these are instinct with the true quality of letters, because they are written as to a friend though addressed to the Prime Minister. And the letters reach the root of the matter as no formal statements or speeches can. Mr Sastri's speeches and articles on Kenya show strength of feeling and freedom of expression. But not all of them put together can bring before us his flaming passion and his deeper thoughts so vividly as the letter to Mr Hope Simpson, one of the longest and the most brilliant in the collection. The truth is, Mr Sastri addresses Mr Hope Simpson, M.P. as a man and a friend worthy of his confidence, and not as a representative of the ruling race.

I fancy Mr Sastri is most himself when he thinks of a friend and takes his pen to write a letter. If I were asked to choose between one of his flights of incomparable eloquence and one of his warm-hearted, self-revealing, delightfully phrased letters I should have no hesitation in making my choice. I should prefer the quiet enjoyment of the epistle to the transport of the speech. Further, if I were to choose between a personal talk with him and one of his charming letters, I am not sure I would not choose the latter. For his letter cannot fail to communicate joy and warmth, while sometimes a personal meeting with him may end in sterile exchange of commonplaces. He puts more of himself into a letter

than into his most confiding and revealing private talk or public speech. Like Cowper, like Lamb and other great letter-writers, he confides in a letter what he is too shy (or perhaps too proud) to utter in personal talk. Writing a letter he breaks through

that wall of distance

That round each one doth grow

And maketh it hard and bitter

Each other's thought to know.

He strikes with his pen a passage across "the unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea" that divides man from man. Mr Sastri's letters reveal, as his speeches do not and cannot, the splendid range of his veiled mind, the freedom of his sympathies, his command of human experience, the warmth of his affections and the strength of his feelings. They reveal the truth about him, that though he may be somewhat slow to warm up, he retains glow for long.

That a considerable body of Mr Sastri's letters has survived for publication and that we are able to read some Gandhi letters as well is a matter for much thankfulness, but it is none of Mr Sastri's doing. It is largely the doing of Dame Chance. He has kept no letters, neither those that he wrote in copy, as some do, nor those that were received by him. He generally tore off letters, but luckily for us some Gandhi letters and other material, besides, have been saved from his murderous hands by some friends, and his brother Mr V. S. Ramaswami Sastri. As for Mr Sastri's own letters, very few recipients seem to have deliberately destroyed them, though not many have preserved them by intention and with care. But persistent

search in likely quarters always met with success. Often the owners of the letters themselves were surprised to find that they had preserved them. Most of the letters seemed to have survived for the reason that people have not had the heart to tear away such good letters and so kept them somehow and somewhere. The letters in this volume have been obtained by a series of fortuitous adventures, of which the joys, thrills and undreamt of surprises were almost as precious as the treasures they led me to.

The reader must now pardon me for writing some paragraphs abounding in the first person singular.

At Annamalai University I had the luck of my life. I grew to be intimate with Mr Sastri and soon I was favoured with letters as splendid as any man could write to another. During vacations almost every morning brought a letter. Politics, books, personalities, grammar points, reminiscences, friendly admonitions, pedagogic severities, deeply self-revealing touches, elevated thought, far-sighted wisdom, delightful humour, flamboyant pessimism, Cassandra-like prophecy, and above all, the sweet voice of affection, the solace of genuine friendship—filled these letters. But what made me a slave to them was the glow of style—the felicities of unstudied perfection, the delightful turns of unpremeditated art. And the beautiful letters were in his beautiful hand—always. (To this day he writes his letters in his own hand). No wonder I loved these letters and wondered too what his letters to others were like.

And then a thing happened—a stroke of great good fortune which started me on my adventures in search of his letters. In Annamalainagar, some four years ago

a friend and I were searching for an old book and he happened to empty an old box containing heaps of decaying old papers. Rummaging these we came by a few typed sheets torn and tattered, the letters faded. I could not believe my eyes when I saw that they were copies of some letters written in 1920 by Mr Sastri. My friend Mr R. Aiyaswami Aiyar (of Annamalai University Library) remembered that they were copies he had typed some fifteen years ago. It came about this way. My friend was library clerk in Sri Minakshi College and he had typed for his Principal Mr K. A. Nilakanta Sastri and for V. Mahadeva Aiyar, nephew of Mr Srinivasa Sastri, copies of some letters sent to them by the members of Mr Sastri's family. Being a person of literary tastes, the clerk appropriated for himself a copy of these letters. For over fifteen years there lay these copies unremembered and mouldering in the dusty company of unimportant papers. I carried away in joy the remnants of these letters and with difficulty reconstructed the text of a few of them. Among the letters thus saved from oblivion are the two letters to Mr V. S. Sankaran (see pages 209—219). I could not in all my later search come by the originals of these letters or other copies of them. What a loss it would have been had I not met with them by a lucky chance! I then conceived the idea of searching seriously for Mr Sastri's letters, because the two letters to his son revealed to me the full splendour of his epistolary art, which, I felt, the public had a right to share with his friends and relations.

A fortnight after I stumbled on this treasure-trove, I set out for Madras on a mission of letter hunting. It would be true to say that by preserving copies of those two letters,

Mr Aiyaswami has been the "onlie begetter" of this collection of letters.

At Madras I swiftly met with luck. I asked Mr Sastri's daughter if she had kept any letters. Yes, she had them in a file. She had not looked at them for years, and she wanted some time to search them out. But the next day she put into my hands trustfully a whole file of letters covering the period 1916 to 1925. These letters, so abundantly alive with incident and description, together with his letters to his son, brother and granddaughter, show that Mr Sastri, in all his wanderings far and near, kept in close touch with his home and shared with his family his impressions and experiences. His letters to his daughter are among the most enthralling in the volume, because they are also the most effortless. The act of chronicling for his daughter's benefit all that happened to him, whether it be the first shock of the beauty of Taj Mahal or the pleasure in the amusing items of a fancy dress competition on a ship, seems to have been no more of an effort to him than to think of his daughter with the longing and love of an 'exiled father' whom the 'cruel seas' had separated from his darling.

At about the same time Mr V. S. Ramaswami Sastri generously gave me his entire collection, huge armfuls of packets and files containing his brother's letters to him as well as miscellaneous biographical matter that had escaped harsh destruction from Mr Sastri. Among the precious material thus obtained were some Gandhi letters, and some good letters that Mr Sastri had written to other friends. The letter to Mr R. Suryanarayana Rao (see pages 224-26), for instance, I found in Mr Ramaswami



Sastri's collection. Indeed he is amongst my most benevolent donors, and I have obtained a good part of my riches from him.

I then approached Mr T. R. Venkatarama Sastri. He was at first inclined to think he had not many letters. But repeated search revealed to his own astonishment that he had kept not only Mr Sastri's letters but those of Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar and others. I have obtained hundreds of letters from this source, and I expect to get many more, for I believe I have not yet had a full sight of Mr Venkatarama Sastri's *nidhi*. Even more than his contribution by way of letters, his constant sympathy in my undertaking was invaluable to me. When Mr Srinivasa Sastri came to know that I was busy collecting his letters, (for I could not keep the fact away from him for long) he acted as a wet blanket on me. If I could persevere in spite of his protests and discouragements, it was largely due to Mr Venkatarama Sastri's unfailing interest in my labours.

When I approached Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar for Mr Sastri's letters, he was warm in praise of them. 'Srinivasa Sastri is our greatest letter-writer. I have preserved every letter of his, but you must give me time.' Rejoiced to hear so great a scholar as Sir Sivaswami Aiyar extol the letters, I said that, for my part, I thought Mr Sastri's epistolary art superior to his gifts of eloquence. The great man beamed with approval and said, 'You are right.' He added: 'I have had letters from almost all our great Indians. I don't think any other can write a letter half so delightfully as Sastriar. There are other orators, but, he is our only letter-writer.' Before a month passed

he sent me a good number of letters carefully preserved in the very envelopes in which Mr Sastri had put them, the envelopes neatly cut with a knife, and the enclosures, if any, also being carefully preserved with the letters. Here certainly was one who had preserved the letters with full intention and care.

Mr D. V. Gundappa of Bangalore had been for years preserving Sastriar's letters and collecting other biographical matter, though Sastriar hardly knew of this fact. Knowing Mr Gundappa's literary gifts and his great devotion to Sastriar, I turned to him as a likely possessor of rare literary treasure. Indeed he was so rich that he could not easily respond to my request. It was after months of importunity that he yielded to me, and unreservedly. It was a drama of five acts—the initial hope, the eager expectation, the disappointment, the revival of hope and finally the triumph of success. When I received his collection I was verily in an embarrassment of riches and marvelled at the generosity of my friend. I was beside myself with joy, especially to find a set of Sastriar's letters to V. Krishnaswami Aiyar. The originals of the letters from which Mr Gundappa made his copy are not now available, and we owe it entirely to him that we are able to read the remarkable letters. These are among the most delightful and most valuable of our letters. Engaging as the letters to Gokhale are, those to V. Krishnaswami Aiyar are far more brilliant. They are particularly valuable as revealing Sastriar in the full vigour of an earlier day, before mellowness had replaced exuberant heat. The freedom of Mr Sastri's expression and the keenness of his criticism in these letters are a virtual tribute to V.

Krishnaswami Aiyar's generous appreciation of genius and genuine love of friends. It is said that it takes two to make a letter. Krishnaswami Aiyar by his friendship and familiarity seems to have inspired Mr Sastri to his best epistolary efforts.

Mr K. Chandrasekharan, son of V. Krishnaswami Aiyar, gave me a file of Mr Sastri's letters to Gokhale in copy. We owe it to him that we are able to read the letters to Gokhale in this collection. What a strange chance it is that Mr Gundappa should give me copies of the letters to V. Krishnaswami Aiyar and that Mr Chandrasekharan should give me copies of the letters to Gokhale!

The idea of setting forth a selection from the Gandhi—Sastri correspondence was suggested to me by my teacher Professor K. Swaminathan. Mahadeva Desai, who was anxious to help me, could not then send me anything more than certain letters written to him by Sastriar. In the meanwhile from Mr Gundappa's files I obtained a considerable body of copies of Gandhi—Sastri letters. I sent these to Mahadeva Desai and obtained permission to publish them. He also sent me the invaluable note on the Gandhi—Sastri friendship, a masterpiece as good as any that came from his sensitive pen. Alas! that Mahadeva is no more. I cannot rejoice in the publication of this book more than he would have. For, this prince of hero-worshippers had for Sastriar a reverence as deep as for his own chosen King of heroes. His soul would rejoice to know that Mr Sastri, who will be long remembered for his many gifts and services, will perhaps be longest remembered as the friend and peer of Mahatma Gandhi and as the author of certain incomparable letters to him.

Mr R. Suryanarayana Rao and Mr D. V. Ambekar have given me the utmost help. The latter sent me old letters from the dusty files of the Society. Among these was a letter in Gandhi's own hand written from Tolstoy Farm during Gokhale's visit to South Africa. From Poona, too, I received Mr P. Kodanda Rao's file marked 1930—1936. From this file I gathered among other letters what I did not get from any other source, copies of the letters to Ramsay MacDonald. Among the other friends who have helped me I should mention Mr S. Natesa Aiyar of Mylapore, who gave me some valuable letters and set me on the track of some others.

Looking back, I am grateful for the series of lucky chances that account for this selection from Mr Sastri's letters. But there are many sources, Indian and foreign, which have yet to be explored. If any friends send me letters care of Mr T. R. Venkatarama Sastri I should be grateful to them beyond words.

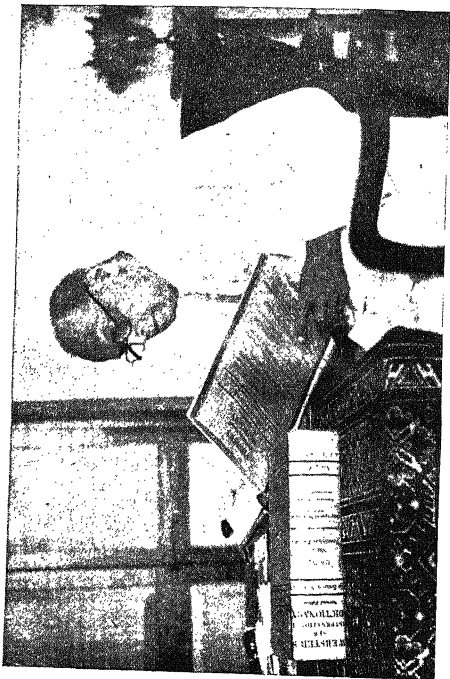
I regret I have no space to thank individually the donors of the letters. The Publishers and I are deeply grateful to every one who has helped us in this publication.

MYLAPORE,

25th February 1944. }

T. N. J.





PORING OVER HIS GITA

## LETTERS TO GOKHALE

DHARMASALA, BENARES<sup>1</sup>

27th December 1905

Dear Sir

Some six months ago I came across a little pamphlet marked *Private* and containing a prospectus of the "Servants of India Society". Since then I have had thoughts of joining it as a member. But I knew you would like before taking me to see me if possible and to make inquiries of trustworthy persons regarding my character. The opportunity has come now and I desire to offer my services. You may ask Madras delegates generally about me; but I would mention in particular Messrs V. Krishnaswami Aiyar and G. A. Natesan, through whose kindness I had the pleasure of being introduced to you at Madras.

I am a schoolmaster in Triplicane with about 17 years' service. I graduated B.A. in 1888 and am now 37 years old. My age, I fear, may be against me, as I may not have many years more to give to the service of my country. Nor have I the confidence that I can do very much in the few years that lie before me. Such as I am, however, I offer myself and hope to be accepted.

I don't write this letter under an impulse of the moment; but the idea has been long in my mind, and it

<sup>1</sup> Mr Sastri was a delegate to the Benares session of the Congress, of which Gokhale was president.

was for this purpose chiefly that I made up my mind to come here as delegate.

I know how busy you are and shall not expect an early answer. But I request you to make your inquiries while the Madras men are within your call. The result I shall wait for till you have leisure. If you decide to take me, I shall require at least six months' time to settle my affairs, as I have some people depending on me, and my affairs are not particularly prosperous. My Madras address is—Head Master, Hindu High School, Triplicane.

Believe me, Dear Sir, Yours, with love and admiration,

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TRIPPLICANE

10th February 1906

My dear Sir

I shall try, as desired by you, to go to Poona in the first week of March to learn the full nature of the step that I propose to take. I know it is a serious step; but I know too that it is not dishonourable. However, you are right in wishing to make sure that I am made aware of all the consequences of my action.

If for some reason you change your plan, please let me know in time.

With loving esteem, Yours truly

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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12th September 1906

My dear Sir

I am very sorry I am not able to fulfil my promise of joining the S. I. S. in September. My present employers were unanimous that the school would suffer by my leaving in the middle of a year. My own weakness for the institution and desire to deal as gently as possible with my mother and my wife disposed me to yield to their persuasions, and I gave my word that I would not resign my post till December next.

I should of course not have done so without your express permission, but you had left India then, and I did not think it necessary to add to your burdens in England,<sup>2</sup> which, God knows, were great enough, though, God be thanked, they have been greatly borne. I trust I am not disturbing the initial arrangements of the Society; indeed I am wrong even to think it possible.

Another little matter wants your attention at leisure. My wife takes the matter more earnestly than I thought, and insists on being taken to Poona. Tears are hard arguments to answer; and I have therefore, against my better judgement, ventured to ask if a way may be found to please her. I hope she may yet come to think differently of the matter before the time comes, but even if she does not, I feel sure that her resolution to follow the husband to the ends of the earth, now sustained by romance and ignorance, cannot survive two months' actual life in entirely strange surroundings with a husband

<sup>2</sup> Gokhale was often consulted by Morley in shaping the Morley-Minto Reforms.

yearning to be free. Perhaps Mr Dravid<sup>3</sup> in his resourcefulness will be able to hit on some expedient which will enable me to enjoy the benefits of the Society's home without entirely ceasing to be a householder.

Believe me, My dear Sir, as ever, with loving regards,

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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HINDU HIGH SCHOOL, TRIPPLICANE

1st November 1906.

My Dear Sir

I resigned my situation last week, asking to be relieved from the 1st of January 1907. School work ceases on the last day of this month, so that I shall be free from the 1st of December next.

When it was known at home that I had sent up my resignation, the inevitable scenes were enacted. The sky is clear once more; but the storm, I expect, is only gathering for one last outburst. I hope, however, the worst is over.

You may not know that Prof. M. Rangacharya M.A., of the Presidency College, is the Secretary of my School Committee. I shall see him in a day or two and ascertain what the Committee intend to do. Whether they relieve me on the 1st of December or the 1st of January, it makes no difference.

I shall certainly attend the next sitting of Congress,—if only to look on our G. O. M.<sup>4</sup> It would be the greatest

<sup>3</sup> Foundation-member of S. I. S.

<sup>4</sup> The Grand Old Man of India, Dadabhai Naoroji.

misfortune of one's life to have missed a sight of him when he was so near.

Arbuthnot & Co.'s failure leaves me unaffected. You know I have not much money; the little that I have was not deposited with them. Neither Mr Krishnaswami nor Mr Natesan is any the worse. I cannot think readily whom else you will be anxious about. Mr Sankaran Nair has lost much, but he is a rich man and need not suffer for it. Do you know the ex-Dewan of Travancore, Mr Krishnaswami Rao, C.I.E.? He has lost his entire savings, not much for his position, and is reduced to something very near distress. Mr Seshagiri Aiyar, B.A., B.L., who was your host one night at Triplicane, has not lost anything. But I will not say more on this subject; it will be never too late to learn of the loss of friends.

As ever, with dutiful regards, Yours truly

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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MYMENSINGH

27th January 1907

THE FIRST MEMBER

Servants of India Society

Dear Sir

Since I last reported to you, we have spent three days in Dacca and three here. The educational institutions of the place are reopening tomorrow after three days' leave. Hence our delay here. But we went the day before yesterday to Muktagatcha, 9 miles away; and

5 On January 15, 1907 Mr Sastri was admitted member of the S. I. S. The next day he started for a tour through East Bengal.

yesterday we went to Gauripur 13 miles away and returned only this evening after a very interesting inspection of a village and minute observation of the economy of some typical tenants' houses.

First, as regards the political situation, when we got to Dacca from Barisal, we seemed to have reached the temperate from the torrid zone. The temperature of this place is, if anything, slightly lower than that of Dacca. The extreme boycott of Mr Pal finds adherents chiefly among the younger generation. The National Schools, which may be taken in both these places to afford a measure of the strength of the *Palites* (please excuse a hateful but convenient word) are in a poor way. The Dacca one receives no support from Babu Anand Chandra Roy<sup>6</sup> and his party, who are in the ascendant; it is patronized by a personal enemy of his named Chakravarti. The Headmaster, who seemed at first to suspect me and examined me narrowly as to motive and credentials, told a sad tale; and the general condition of the school was, in one word, wretched. The National School here is better, but only slightly so. The Headmaster is a capable, zealous, and spirited man, but complains of the absolute indifference of the general public and the neglect of all the local zamindars (except one who is unfortunately in pecuniary embarrassment). As I write now, he is haranguing the public in Bengali on the National Education scheme. But if one is to judge from the attitude of a zamindar said to be in every way of the best type—Babu Nagendra Narain Acharji Chowdri—the poor headmaster is in for a bitter disappointment. Personally I consider

<sup>6</sup> Mr Sastri's host; the most influential political leader of Dacca then.

it a pity that these National Schools should fall into the hands, and be looked upon as the special care, of the extreme party. Turbulent boys and inflamed agitators are not the best guarantee of the success of an educational movement. However, there is one thing on which I look with unmixed satisfaction—the triumph of Swadeshi among the Hindus; zamindars and tenants, extremists and moderates, vakils and school masters, all are firm adherents of Swadeshi, and use their influence in spreading it. I wish it were possible to say half as much of other parts of India. I cannot argue it out, but I believe it is sound economics and true patriotism. East Bengal is doing its duty bravely, and may well be proud.

The Mohammedan question is rather more ticklish than at Barisal. Men put on a grave look when they speak of it. There is, however, a singular unanimity with regard to it. Except among a few educated Mohammedans and the pretty considerable class of Mohammedan weavers called *Jolas*, the anti-Swadeshi feeling is universal. Some are aggressive customers of Velati<sup>7</sup> shops. At one time a strong combination coerced Mohammedan employers to dispense with Hindu labour. I find it hard to believe, but it seems to be the truth, that such thorough opposition to the country's cause is the work of a band of Maulvis paid by the Nawab of Dacca and helped by the police. Luckily, the Nawab is hastening to a fall; and a wholesome influence is arising which is expected to assert itself. The growth of education is believed to be the sure remedy though it must be slow. Mohammedan organization and agitation will soon get to be considered by Government in the same light as the I. N. C. Dy. Magistracies and

7 Shops where foreign goods are sold.

Police Inspectorships are not enough to satisfy the future ambition of the Mohammedans, and their gravitation towards us is inevitable. Meantime let us watch in patience. And the most hopeful feature in the situation is the forbearance of the Hindus.

I am struck with the public spirit and the high level of general education attained by the zamindars of this District. It is in such marked contrast to the condition of Madras landlords.

The hospitality of these people is extraordinary. There are so many dishes and so many sweets at every meal that, but for my resolution, hitherto sternly kept, of never eating my fill, I should have taken ill by this time. Everywhere (I blush to say it) I am made too much of. At Mymensingh some students turned up at the station, and their scramble for our luggage could only be checked by Amulya Babu's pointing to the appealing looks of the porters. We were driven to our lodgings amid cries of *Vande Mataram*. Just imagine the plight I was in; I could hardly find my tongue to thank them. Poor fellows! a speech would have rewarded them. But it takes much to tempt me to face an audience, and (superfluously) I had been forbidden to deliver messages.<sup>8</sup> In many ways it is hard to follow Mr Devadhar.<sup>9</sup> Everywhere he is the subject of genuine praise. Full of inquiry, jolly, learned, hearty, good fellow, I must write to him, what is his address?—these are the exclamations that you hear on

8 The rules of the S. I. S. forbid a member while under training to write or speak in public.

9 Foundation-member of the S. I. S., became its president in 1927.

his name being mentioned. He seems to have expounded the *Gita* not only to students in Dacca, but to an amiable old gentleman in exchange, apparently, for much valuable information concerning the Permanent Settlement. I fear I am dull after him. But I try my best to develop the bump of inquisitiveness, though I am never destined to grow into such a big? as Devadhar. I have succeeded, I fancy, in overcoming my incommunicativeness; and at Muktagacha the day before yesterday, goaded to desperation by a rather pointed reference to Mr Devadhar, I rattled off to such good purpose that the good brothers (they were two) actually begged me to go over again before leaving the District. I graciously promised with a reservation, but am already planning to break the promise lest I should have to make another great effort to keep up my reputation. Not content with this disservice, which perhaps he could not help rendering me, Devadhar is adding another torment in the array of questions of which he says I should make a 'study' at every place. That word 'study' frightens me. But I bow to the inevitable and do my poor best. Really, you cannot imagine and I cannot tell how much I owe him in this tour. To speak of nothing else, how many letters he has written to people all over the province preparing them to receive a great visitor! I never can thank him enough, let alone repaying him.

If you have not heard, you will soon hear, from a teacher of the Government School at Dacca, by name \* \* \* \*. He desires to join our Society. Therefore at his instance I desire to say a few words about him. He is a popular master, and bears a good character. I have ascertained by inquiry. I found him very eager for sacrifice in the country's cause. He has a daughter,

but means to have no more children, whatever you may think of it. He is given to study, and I have read a paper of his on 'Marriage after Puberty' which shows some turn for inquiry and criticism. But I fear his judgement is not yet mature. His views too need a little correction. I have told him that he will have to stay with us for some time in Poona during the summer holidays, as he is unable to go out of Dacca before that. He is willing to do so. If his mind holds till then, I would recommend his trial.

Believe me, Dear Sir, Sincerely yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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COMILLA

3rd February 1907

THE FIRST MEMBER

Servants of India Society

Dear Sir

Since we left Mymensingh, we have been at Chandpur and Chittagong and arrived here last night. Tonight we are leaving for Silchar where we shall remain for two days.

We found Chandpur in a state of violent excitement. The people have not been let alone by Government. But what struck me most was that the prosecution was about to be dropped for want of evidence. Not a single man could be found, the dread of social boycott is so great and so real. The prosecution has been dropped, I hear. The young men are phenomenally active, and a youth or



two from the Suhrit Samithi of Mymensingh, a band of fire-eaters most of them, were there scouring the country round. Hardyal Nag, our best host there, is an extremist, and he carries all before him. There was a conference of leaders, which we were asked to attend. The conference was fairly businesslike and showed earnestness. The whole district of Comilla is taking up in right earnest the question of organizing district and local associations in pursuance of the Congress resolution. At the meeting we were thanked for our presence, and as at other places, I was requested to address the people. Of course I pleaded that I had been forbidden to speak, though I didn't tell them how much it agreed with my own inclinations. At Chittagong, the extremists are few and are chiefly young men. Even the students have taken the boycott fever in a mild form. But the Swadeshi is as strong as elsewhere, and my hosts, Babus Nagendra and Prasanna Kumar Roy, seemed to take the same view of the matter as I. At Comilla we were met upon our arrival in a rather uncomfortable way by a virulent boycotter. He was wroth with the Bengali leaders of Calcutta in general, whom he called deserters and self-seeking men. For Bombay, Madras, the Punjab and other provinces which wouldn't adopt the boycott, he had nothing but contempt tinged with pity. Is this the way we are going to be one nation? Has not Government proved false utterly and hopelessly? Can any more justice be looked for in the law courts? Why not refer everything to arbitration by our own men? Resuscitate the village community and so on and so on. My host Babu Bhudhar Das is of the same mind though he speaks more mildly. And so I understand are all but a very few. The National School of this place is attended by over

2,000 boys, no one of whom was expelled from another place. Of course here too there are ugly prosecutions and arrests going on to keep the people inflamed at heart. One is sorely pained to hear the stories of oppression narrated. The Mohammedans keep aloof as a body, but in all these three places the leaders have the same firm faith in the final result. Education will surely bring the remedy, they all say.

I am very dull now and will stop. Sincerely yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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JORHAT

9th February 1907

THE FIRST MEMBER

Servants of India Society

Dear Sir

Since I last reported from Comilla, I have spent two days at Silchar, two in travelling, and two at this place. We shall leave this evening for Dibrugarh on the frontier.

At Comilla I met several people. Of one, I wrote in my last. I saw him again before leaving the place and was once more treated to a hot denunciation of the British Government, its educational system and its oppressiveness and a violent and I must say, ill-natured attack on Bhupendra Babu, Surendra Babu and others. This man is a Government servant, being a teacher in the local school, having been recently removed from Dacca, apparently for his Swadeshi proclivities. My Comilla host is the leader of the bar. He is tall and handsome, with a commanding voice and stately manners. He bends

like a courtier and throws a great deal of humility into his courtesy. I thought it would be uncomfortable to deal with him, but he speedily laid aside his distant air and talked freely. I found him an out-and-out *Palito*, though he took care to add that he had some toleration for the moderates. Others whom I saw were without it. One vakil, reputed to be rising and influential, put it syllogistically to me this way. What we gain, Englishmen must lose. Men don't like to lose. Englishmen are human, etc. They have never given concessions before. Irishmen and Indians have wrested them. Let us no longer ask. Have nothing to do with the rulers. If we all kept aloof, where would they be? Let us begin it at once, as it is foolish to wait for time. The Secretary of the local National School is a thoughtful quiet man, but he too has lost faith in agitation and looks forward with disturbed feelings to the coming conflict, which he thinks inevitable. The Moderates are nowhere, except among the Mussalmans. I asked to be taken or shown to one of these anti-Swadeshis, but was told that not one of them knew English enough or had intelligence enough to talk over the subject. The National School is largely supported by the public and, though students had not been prosecuted or expelled, as many as 250 of them joined the National School within a few weeks of its starting. The technical branch is about to be opened and the monthly doles are readily and cheerfully paid up. The Secretary is a wise man and does not look upon this as a permanent basis. He will set about gathering donations. He is full of hope, the only point on which he is diffident being the low average intelligence of the boys that have joined. He is the only man whom I have spoken to who is not hopeful of the Mohammedan attitude. He fears they may be a

perpetual menace to our unity. The others are optimists in the matter.

At Silchar the political tide does not seem to run high. Even Swadeshi receives languid support. The boys, however, are of the extreme persuasion, though they have taken the infection in a mild form. A few hardy fellows stood out against the loyal headmaster and were expelled. In a few days, however, they submitted, apologized, and were taken back. I devoted my attention mainly to the Manipuris, whom I found a highly interesting people.

At Jorhat too the political feeling is not strong. The Swadeshi movement has not given rise to a single shop exclusively Swadeshi. Indigenous goods, however, command a better sale than before. Extremists are scarcely to be met with. My *host*, a brahmin planter of means, though an ardent patriot, has nothing but contempt for Pal and his teachings. Mohammedans are few in number, but have shown signs of separatism in a marked degree. At the instance of Sir B. Fuller they have recently organized an Anjuman, and presented an address on their own account to Mr Hare.<sup>10</sup> A feeling of mutual suspicion and ill-will seems to exist between Bengalis and Assamese here, the Government officials doing their best to aggravate it. Inter-marriages and inter-dining don't exist. Competition for places in service and prizes elsewhere seems to add to the bitterness. I am told that it will be many years before the feeling dies out. Yesterday I spent many hours in my host's tea garden. My impression so far is that the coolies are not so badly off as I thought. But I must observe more at Dibrugarh, to which I am going

<sup>10</sup> Sir Lancelot Hare, lieutenant-governor *vice* Fuller.

tonight. I am sorry I must deny myself the pleasure of seeing Mrs Shaw at Moheema, as it is a tedious journey and may keep me here two days longer. I shall see a European plantation or two at Dibrugarh instead.

We are both doing very well. Sincerely yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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c/o THE PRIVATE SECRETARY  
TO THE DEWAN

HIGH GROUND, BANGALORE

22nd July 1907

My dear Baba Sahib

This morning the Dewan<sup>11</sup> came into my room and sat for over an hour, talking on all subjects and sundry. He began by making inquiries of your health and, on knowing the truth, asked me to ascertain whether you would accept an invitation to spend some time in Bangalore. The climate of this place is no doubt bracing, but I said that Poona was just now very agreeable and doubted whether your business would let you remain away long enough. However, as he seemed concerned, I promised to write and ask.

After I had made some courtly inquiries of his rumoured elevation, the conversation drifted to politics. I will not describe it here any further than this. It was a surprise to me from start to finish. His views coincide with mine on most topics, while on some he goes further. He is full of Vivekananda and the breaking of the hypnotic spell. I had thought my politics crude

11 Dewan Bahadur V. P. Madhava Rao, C.I.E.

and uninformed, but I see one may be more experienced in the affairs of life, but not necessarily wiser. I will try hard to resist the feeling of pride, which insidiously enters my heart.

My bad luck is at my heels. Who would ever think of a Dewan putting his faith in a public meeting and the effect of a speech? Mr Madhava Rao wants this done. I mildly protested and suggested a short statement before a select meeting of likely donors. But no! I am content to bear the cross, seeing I needs must. But will it advance or hinder the flow of donations? O! for a breath of the spirit of Devadhar!

The Dewan thinks it best for him to introduce me personally to the Maharaja, but the exact date of his arrival here is not known even to him. So I have to play a waiting game. He will speak to the important men of the place and try to interest them in the matter.

Yours with dutiful regards,

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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111, BIG STREET, TRIPPLICANE

28th March 1911

My dear Baba Sahib

I saw H. E. yesterday.<sup>12</sup> The interview lasted an hour and forty-five minutes. We talked freely on many subjects. Our Society came in only for a mention, though my lecturing tours occupied a few minutes. The Governor talked without much reserve, and so I did on my part.

Sir Arthur Lawley. In November he was succeeded by  
12 Lord Carmichael.

I had been told it was not necessary to talk of the espionage,<sup>13</sup> and so I did not.

You came in for some complimentary references. You were the best speaker in the Imperial Council. You had been offended by being called 'Leader of the Opposition', etc. Why did you not visit Madras? H. E. had looked forward to meeting you with great interest. Would you come this year? etc.

I saw also the Private Secretary. I did not see any indication that I was a suspect.

Neither seemed to favour the Education Bill.<sup>14</sup> The Bishop is dead against it. So, I fear, are the Europeans generally, except a missionary who visited me the other day and spoke kindly of the Bill. The *Madras Mail* has declared strongly against. I have sent in a reply, but the editor whom I know personally, has sent word that he would publish it today with a 'rap' administered to me. I fear he has put the matter in the hands of some civilian. I will return to the charge. Tomorrow I shall send copies.

Both Krishnaswami and Natesan were greatly concerned to hear of your health, and bade me write requesting you to take complete rest. I really hope the Poona air will set you up quickly.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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13 Members of the S. I. S. were then watched by the C. I. D.

14 A bill to make elementary education compulsory. It became, as Gokhale said, one of the numerous failures to his credit. See Mr Sastri's *Life of Gokhale*, pages 91-95.

17, SYDOJI LANE, TRIPLICANE

26th April 1911

My dear Baba Sahib

The Education Bill has been referred to Local Boards, which are to submit opinions to Government before the 10th of May. A campaign before that would be very useful. I shall be free about the 15th of May. I will do what is possible after that date. I shall not go to Ooty therefore, unless it be to interview members of Council and Sir Harold Stuart<sup>15</sup> on this subject. Do you think that any good? Its only result will be that I shall have seen them once.

Meanwhile I have prepared a leaflet for circulation to members of local bodies and through newspapers. It will be translated into the vernaculars and distributed in all the districts. I am going to print thousands of copies. Let it be widely known at least.

I'll send an English copy tomorrow.

The Bishop of Madras and Mrs Whitehead are going to England. They take boat in Bombay on the 1st of July and propose to spend two days in Poona immediately before that *for the sake of seeing the Society and living there*. They are anxious to know whether we can put them up in our place as they would much prefer it to anything else. I have no doubt they will be welcome, but should greatly desire that you invite them by letter. As the second best course, I should like you to authorise me to invite them in person. They have asked me to stay with them if I should go to Ooty. To Ranganathan<sup>16</sup> and

15 Chief Secretary.

16 A member of the Society then, he has left it since.



to me they are so kind, I can't tell you how much. I am sure they have helped to remove much Anglo-Indian prejudice against us. I know our guest house is too simple for them, but they are aware of our limitations and won't mind. And we may well take some additional trouble and put them up. Mrs W. has told me and Ranganathan half a dozen times that they should so like to be asked. She has apparently made the other arrangements necessary and waits for our invitation.

It is extraordinary V. K. and Mrs W. have become great friends. I am sure at Ooty they will be thrown more together. Mrs W.'s influence is seen already in V. K.'s resolve to discard *Dhoti* altogether (i.e.) even at night on the *hills* and in his taking tea with them. Mrs W. is hoping yet to get him to eat vegetarian food prepared in her house. He was trying some weeks ago to get his last daughter married this season; but I fear a few days before he left Madras he had begun to say he didn't care very much; even if she came of age, it would only be to drive him to act up to his convictions!

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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17, SYDOJI LANE, TRIPPLICANE

28th May 1911

My dear Baba Sahib

I returned home yesterday for a meeting of the School Final Board tomorrow.

From Ooty I went to Madura and spent four days interviewing the Municipal Councillors and District Board

members. I believe the Bill will be accepted by both bodies.

There is some fear of Trichy as the *Wednesday Review* has been ridiculing the leaflet and my article. On the 2nd or 3rd June I propose to go down to that place for a campaign of three days.

Ranganathan, Venkatasubbayya and Ramachandra Rao<sup>17</sup> are in different places. Everywhere the Bill is accepted so far as the principle is concerned. Various amendments are proposed and in two or three places a rider is added that the additional taxation is impracticable. Even Coonoor and Ootacamund, of which the Councils are mainly European, accept the principle. The former has passed the resolution, the latter, I was led to believe, will do so soon.

This does not, however, mean that the Bill is understood by the public. Misconceptions of a serious nature still exist and misgivings are widely entertained. Popular feeling has still to be roused. Our Tamil and Telugu versions of your speech and of the Bill are likely to do a great deal, and there is plenty of good that a few months' rural work can accomplish. I have seen the smaller officials freely throwing their services and influence on the side of the bill. Apparently the Civil Service is indifferent how the votes of local bodies go where it is not actively in our favour.

I have received gratifying tokens of appreciation of our leaflet and pamphlet idea. Without them few persons will have any notion of the Bill or its leading ideas.

17 Members of the S. I. S.

Mr Krishnaswami is enthusiastic in its praise. I am afraid only of its cost.

At Ooty I saw the members of Council and Sir Harold Stuart. I had a kind reception from all, Sir Harold being almost cordial. "Let us have notice" he said, "before you lead a revolutionary band." I stayed with the Bishop and Mrs Whitehead for a day, and they introduced me as their guest to several persons at a large party given by the Atkinsons (second member and his wife). H. E. must have caused a little stir as *he* came behind me (without my knowing it) and calling me by name, shook my hand cordially and made a few kind inquiries. When he received the deputation next day he referred to my presence among them as a representative of various other movements, political, social and economic, etc., etc. If he had only named me or the society it would have been a distinct official recognition of our status.

'Have you really dropped caste?' asked Mr Atkinson in a half-incredulous way. 'I see you are stopping with the Bishop and his wife.' Sir Murray Hammick inquired 'You are stopping with Mr Krishnaswami?' Mr K. himself motored me up to the door when I called on Sir Harold Stuart. 'I want him to know', he said, 'on what terms we stand.' He thinks Sir Harold somewhat of a dissembler, not so good as he appears.

I fear I rather surprised and even annoyed Mr K. by my indifference to Pandit Malaviyaji's Hindu University. As a sort of summing up, he said he could see that we had had no clear guidance in the matter from you. I observed that you had not spoken in public, but that you had nearly promised the services of one of us to Panditji and those of another to the Aga Khan. He is very severe on

*The Hindu* for its criticism of Mrs Besant. One of his reasons, but only one, is that it will retard her University scheme. Do you know, by the way, he has been given, in addition to Local and Municipal, Salt and Abkari, Customs, Pensions, and Registration? It is all H. E.'s doing. He seems to have satisfied Government that he is absolutely safe. For the rest his ability scores heavily, and I believe, though he did not tell me in so many words, that it is an "accepted" fact. A small circumstance however, must be added to complete the gossip. They appear to be saying, the Indian member's contribution is unpunctuality. Not in disposal, in that he is quicker than the rest, but in attendance at meetings and parties. Mr K. says he has unfortunately given occasion for the remark, but as he is constitutionally incapable of the *mea culpa* attitude, blames the wretched necessity for "dressing" in the western style! His daughters are doing Ooty with unexpected zest. What with morning walks and calls and returns of calls, they are perfectly changed. Two of them talk English fairly, and the whole family visited Lady Lawley and her daughters and on return reported a lively conversation they had had!

Mrs Whitehead I found rather in despair of Mr K. He wouldn't still dine with her, he dresses so fantastically, he is never in time, he is harsh of speech to servants, never saying 'please' or 'thanks' even by mistake, he is going to marry his daughter at twelve, he wants caste arrangements at Delhi, he always argues against Christianity. Poor lady, she does her best for him—more perhaps than he knows. But why won't he conceal his rebellious tuft of hair inside his huge turban? And why must his inner wear peep out of his trousers at the nether end? Mr K., being gently admonished on these

high crimes and misdemeanours, occasionally breaks out (especially if I am by or another friend, so Mrs W. says; it seems he is quite teachable when he is quite alone) into a furious onslaught of the futility of western manners, etc.

It was a happy week I had with those good friends—marred only by a particular severe headache, which persecuted me for quite a fortnight, and real grief marked our parting after vain protests against my sudden departure and neglect of health.

This letter has grown too long, and I fear, slipped insensibly into the personal and gossipy.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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17, SYDOJI LANE, TRIPPLICANE.

12th July 1911

My dear Baba Sahib

The Senate gave us no trouble whatever.<sup>18</sup> I had asked two gentlemen to reserve themselves specially against possible opponents, but there was no occasion either for them or for me to speak. Natesan had the honour of moving the resolution, and did so in a speech which was good on the whole.

Sir S. Subramania Aiyar has consented to be President of the League and to take the Chair at the inaugural

18 Over the Education Bill.

meeting. He pleaded infirmity at first, but felt that he *ought not* to withhold anything in his power from such as you. We had a long and interesting talk. One remark of his was that Ranade was much the greatest Indian of his time and almost alone of those he knew, could conduct acute public controversies without the slightest personal bias either before or after.

Your programme is filling up. A broadminded and influential Mohammedan, Yakub Hasan, intends to give you a dinner at D'Angelis's. He means to do it in style and ask many friends. I have encouraged the idea so far, as I believe it will have a wholesome influence, not only on the Mohammedans, but on our excessively orthodox Brahman friends. A somewhat more difficult matter is a proposal by students to present an address to you. Mr Seshagiri Aiyar is keen that room must be made for it. Students, he says, have not had a shaking, since Pal's advent<sup>19</sup> and Mr Gokhale's straight talk will do much good. On other grounds too I should approve. But the temper of the European Principals must be reckoned with, and I know by experience that the reports on that head of the students themselves are not always trustworthy. If such an address finally comes off, I shall see that it is not accompanied by any unpleasantness. A joint entertainment by the Mahajana Sabha and the Provincial Congress Committee is in contemplation, but it has so far not taken any shape. The day you arrive I propose to ask a few select persons to tea in the afternoon—men on whom you may not be able to call—but whom it would be well to see before the meeting. The editor of the *Madras Mail* may be among these. I know him.

<sup>19</sup> See page 36.

Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar has written placing part of his house and his carriage at your disposal. Of course a suitable reply will be sent.

Somebody has been announcing your visit in the papers. 'The Present Situation' is their title of your speech! I remember you said 'The Needs and Responsibilities of Public Life'. Perhaps 'The Needs of Public Life' would be shorter and not less expressive.

There being hardly time enough, it is not possible for me to take your full instruction in fixing up the programme. I must use my judgement such as it is; and I have to ask that you should put up with the inconveniences and annoyances to which I might subject you. I will remember that you can't bear to be rushed. But Madras is a large place and gets only two days of you; and I must say too many of its big folk are still under the primitive wonderment that you may imagine to govern simple-minded persons when they see a great man. Some funny visitors you may have, worshipping you in such varied ways as by silence or a flood of talk, by delicate suggestions or fulsome flattery. Natesan is for a public reception; but I am strongly against it, knowing your aversion to loud things and your incapacity to stand the physical strain. It is impossible to keep the young men from the platform or the Railway Station compound but we can take care of you and drive you home as fast as decency will allow.

Your most affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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c/o V. P. MADHAVA RAO, C.I.E.

HIGH GROUND, BANGALORE

29th August 1911

My dear Baba Sahib

You will have read in the papers of the Mysore Government having prevented two lectures of mine.<sup>20</sup> I am meeting the Dewan and the Assistant Resident tomorrow afternoon by appointment.

I am positive nothing that I said in the three lectures that had been permitted could have led to this action on the part of the Mysore Government.

At one meeting, that on your Elementary Education Bill, Madhava Rao himself presided. At another a retired Deputy Chief Engineer presided. At the third I was chairman myself, the Headmaster of one of the local schools being the principal speaker. At the first meeting that was stopped, your old friend Karpur Srinivasa Rao, now Dy. Chief Engineer here, was to have presided. Yesterday Mr Madhava Rao was to have presided. I mention these details to show that the series of lectures had been planned with the knowledge and consent of the chief men of the place; and from them I have had the most cordial treatment.

20 Dewan T. Ananda Rao banned the lectures. The first lecture was to have been under the auspices of the Young Men's Indian Association, and the subject was something like 'How students can serve the Motherland'. The order of prohibition was served about an hour or so before the time of the meeting. The next day, Mr Sastri was to have spoken on 'Hindu Marriage Reform' in the Sankara Mutt Hall, with Dewan Bahadur V. P. Madhava Rao in the chair. A large meeting had gathered, when he announced the order of prohibition.



The mischief does not probably originate with the Mysore Police.

I feel I cannot leave the place without seeing the authorities and offering and asking for explanations.

I am now with Mr Madhava Rao and acting under his advice. But I shall use my own judgement at every step. You need not fear I shall do or say anything that may make our position difficult.

Nobody can regret so much as I that such an incident has occurred. I never expected it and certainly nobody else did.

But I must conduct myself both with dignity and restraint in this situation. I am overwhelmed with the responsibility that I incur, for the reputation of the Society is involved as well as its safety. In this trial all I can say is, I will not be rushed into doing anything sensational for its sake merely, and I trust I shall do nothing dishonourable.

Unfortunately the newspapers will make noise and make the tension acute. Bangalore is a quiet place luckily and the disapproval of the public is not likely to cause any local trouble.

Yours with loving regards

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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## SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

Madras Branch

17, SYDOJI LANE, TRIPPLICANE

1st September 1911

My dear Baba Sahib

The Dewan would tell me nothing for publication. In confidence he said our Society was considered by the British authorities as political (and therefore dangerous). We are proscribed foreigners and not at all welcome in native States. This seems to be a recent development, for when I mentioned my former visit (of three years ago) he said many things had happened since then, and there were adverse opinions of our Society recorded by persons who had in public praised our work. On the whole he seemed helpless in the matter. Even if I wrote officially he said he had made up his mind not to reply.

The Resident would not see me, his assistant merely heard me patiently and had nothing to say.

To put myself right with the public, I have obtained two opinions as to the perfectly harmless nature of my speeches, which I propose publishing in the papers tomorrow. But neither this nor another thing I propose to do will be done without taking the best advice available. The other thing is to write a letter to the Resident setting forth the whole case. I shall send you a copy as soon as possible but do not mean, unless otherwise advised, to publish it without your express leave. I shall reserve the right of publication.

Need I say that I feel the situation keenly and wept bitter tears as I talked the matter over with Mr Madhava

Rao? But he thinks I have done no wrong and entirely supports me.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

17, SYDOJI LANE, TRIPLICANE

25th December 1911

My dear Baba Sahib

On my return from Madura I at once saw Mr. K. He had asked for me, and though he was very weak we had a rambling talk for about 20 minutes. He wanted me to see him again before I left for Calcutta as I proposed to do on the 22nd. That day, however, I found visitors were not allowed to see him as he had become worse. When a list was shown him of those who had called he desired to see me. He told me of an operation that was being decided upon, and though it was pronounced simple, diabetic blood could not be trusted etc. Then he told the others in the room to go away for a time and in his own decided tone spoke to this effect:

“ I wrote out my last will in October last and saw that it was in order before leaving for Delhi. I want to make sundry changes in it, but fear to do so now lest it should frighten the poor girls. Besides, it might cause a great uproar. I shall make those changes if I improve somewhat in three or four days. Then it won't alarm any one. I should like you to read the will now so that you may see that nothing is amiss, but it is not possible.....”

No biography, if you please: I don't want a biography ..... I leave some correspondence behind, much of it confidential. Of course there are degrees of confidence, and you will now use your discretion. You take possession of the correspondence from Mani<sup>21</sup> and Chandrachudan (his son and his brother) when the time comes, if it comes.....

If you wish to point a moral from my life,—flattery of officials, knee-crooking, fawning on the powers that be, tale-bearing, etc. are unnecessary for a man's rise even to the top.....

I want to do some things yet for the country. I do hope God will not take me away before I have done them . . . . .

You say you are not going to Calcutta? Let not my illness stand in the way: the country's work before all other things!.....

Any how you don't go today or tomorrow? Very well: come then after 12 noon tomorrow. By that time the operation would be over..... You will be here nearly always, you say? That is as you like.....”

Next day—23rd instant—I saw him again immediately before the operation, everything looking solemn and the family standing round in silence though no tears were shed. He whispered to me:

“They say it is a simple operation. Simple it is—in one sense. But.....Yes, I *am* brave and feel strong. I can stand the chloroform.”

21 Mr K. Balasubramania Aiyar.

The operation was thorough and successful, as I wired to you. Yesterday he was progressing well till noon when a bad turn began. Fits of unconsciousness, wandering talk, convulsions, unsteady pulse, etc. The hiccough, which had begun on the 21st, was particularly troublesome. General alarm was felt. The Indian doctor threw up his hands. Then they talked of 'giving' him the *prāyasçitta*. The purohīts were sent for. The eldest girl swooned as the preparations seemed earnest. Then we intervened, some of us, and insisted on the English doctor being consulted before the ceremony was resolved on. Before he could come, at about 6-15 p.m. in the evening, there was a rally. The patient regained clear consciousness, but the first use to which it was put was to show him the *mantras* he must himself pronounce! Evidently the matter had been put to him already, for at once he called for his spectacles and read the paper in his own intense way.... "Why is this written down? I have not got to say it. This other thing here is not necessary. Where is that essential *mantra*? I see, it is here on this page. Very well. You see it is this way. Yesterday the two European doctors together signed a bulletin pronouncing my condition hopeful. This morning Dr. Smith has written to the Governor to say my condition is satisfactory. If now I act on Dr. Nanjunda Rao's opinion and take the *prāyasçitta* they will call him a damned fool. Besides, what shall I say to the Governor? No, no: let us wait till Dr. Smith comes again. If he says my case is hopeless or even difficult, we shall go on with this matter."

This he said with such calmness and decision that it brought hope to all. When the doctor came he talked to him collectedly, and we returned home a little encouraged.

This morning the fever is again at 102-4 and the hiccough troublesome. The patient is very weak, but quite clear. The doctor reports the wound healthy and the general condition slightly better. But we are not reassured, especially as he has ordered the nourishment to be injected through the rectum.

He remembered you just before the operation. "Did you write to Mr Gokhale?" he asked me. "No", I said, "not after the telegram which I sent at your instance on the 20th instant." "Write today after the operation is over and wire the substance."

While he is in this condition I cannot go to Congress. I hope you approve of my decision. Why, I feel you would like to be here yourself if that were possible.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY

Madras Branch

17, SYDOJI LANE, TRIPPLICANE

7th February 1912

My dear Baba Sahib.

I am ashamed to think how long I have postponed writing to you. Everyday during the last fortnight I have desired to write, but "tomorrow" has always seemed better, as I might have something more definite to say.

A little speech I made on the spur of the moment at the Krishnaswami memorial meeting led to something unexpected and kept me in a flutter for a few days. It is

all over now. The Governor sent for me next day and, after referring briefly to the meeting, asked me my candid opinion of the various persons he was thinking of for the Council vacancy. I spoke out my mind freely. Among his names he said he had originally included mine, but he had since found it would not do. I laughed. He said it wasn't so laughable after all, and went on to talk of others. Next after me went in Mr Justice Sundara Aiyar, and the first person he asked him about was me. Mr Sundara Aiyar said it would be well to give me a brief term in the Legislative Council first. The Governor must have asked others too, I guess, including his Councillors and the Chief Secretary. Two days later Sir S. Subramania Aiyar sent to ask me whether I would care to be nominated to the Legislative Council, where there was (and still is) a vacancy. I replied I would rather get in by election. Sir S. S. sent back asking me to reconsider my decision in view of the difficulty of securing election, now that Krishnaswami Aiyar was lost. Then I agreed. He wrote to the Governor requesting that I should be appointed to the vacancy. Three days after, the Governor sent for Sir S. S. and regretted his inability to put me in. The reason he gave under seal of confidence was that his colleagues objected to me because I belonged to a Society which was (or should be ?) under observation. (Sir S. S. is not clear as to the last part). At the same time—it could scarcely be a mere coincidence—the espionage that had been stopped altogether for months was resumed! As I write now, two fellows are on me, one at each end of the lane. Deeply mortified at this turn, Sir S. S. went to the Bishop and requested him to tell the Governor what he thought of the Society. The Bishop, I understand, did this promptly. The Governor promised

to see that the incident did not affect the future, adding that, if he were to continue in Madras, he would nominate me in spite of his colleagues, but that he did not like to leave the consequences to his successor.

Either a Councillor or the Chief Secretary, Sir Harold Stuart, must have ordered the resumption of the espionage to justify their opposition and perhaps provide against the future too.

By his utterly unconventional and democratic proposal the Governor has unwittingly done us harm. I did nothing actively, but I shouldn't wonder if the Civilians in and around Government House thought I was a loafer trying to take advantage of the Governor's inexperience.

Luckily the affair is not widely known. I propose to leave on the 15th instant for Calcutta.

Yours in love and duty

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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17, SYDOJI LANE, TRIPPLICANE

9th July 1914

My dear Baba Sahib

Allow me to congratulate you on your decision to decline the knighthood. I remember, when last we talked of it here, I was inclined to think you should not refuse it. In a way of course the matter has come about differently. An opportunity has been given you of stating your personal feeling; the refusal would have been very difficult otherwise, and might have laid you open in some quarters to misconstruction. As it is, there is a completeness in the



satisfaction that one feels. Somehow, I do not know whether it is quite a proper feeling, I am gratified that the offer *was* made, and the general expectation of the country came true. H. M.'s Government have done the right thing and in time will be known to have done so; and you, I needn't say it, would be more honoured with the honour refused than with it accepted.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

## LETTERS TO V. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR<sup>1</sup>

SERVANTS OF INDIA HOME, POONA CITY

20th May 1907

My dear Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar

My former students have written to me in glowing terms of Mr. Pal's propagandist work in Madras,<sup>2</sup> and

1 Mr Sastri's affection and admiration for the late Mr V. Krishnaswami Aiyar will be evident from some references in this book. When Mr Sastri recently perused his letters to Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar he wrote:—"One feature gives me great satisfaction. The letters will bring into full view the genuine love that drew Gokhale and Krishnaswami Aiyar together."

In a lecture entitled 'Gokhale and His Friends' (delivered 19th February 1937, Madras) Mr Sastri said:—"One, however, I will name as particularly connected in these parts with his memory, Mr V. Krishnaswami Aiyar. Between them there was a great bond of affection. I should say Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar, strong man as he was and not accustomed to yield to others, felt the commanding influence of Gokhale in political matters. He was glad to follow Gokhale and accept his judgement. I have heard Gokhale tell me more than once that, of all men in India, the one who seemed to have a gift of imagination and from six thousand miles could divine what was taking place in London was Krishnaswami Aiyar. He said, "When I was discussing the constitution with Morley and Morley made statements of a somewhat depressing character and the papers were full of angry criticism, the one man who sent to me consoling remarks, understanding the inwardness of the situation, was Mr Krishnaswami." There are letters in the collection of Mr Gokhale's papers showing that Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar sometimes gave to this great man in London much encouragement and inspiring which were badly required."

2 'Babu Bipin Chunder Pal burst into full fame in Madras as a preacher of the new political creed. For several days on the sands of the beach he spoke words hot with emotion and

asked me how it is possible for a genuine patriot like Mr Gokhale or Mr-V. K. Aiyar, to differ from him. Though I agree that it is necessary to combat his doctrines, I cannot persuade myself that their spread will do **unmixed** harm. Grimness is one of the elements that our patriotism needs now, and I believe that Mr Pal's lectures are calculated to develop that quality. We have had some troubles so far; but what are these to the miseries that the people must go through before any considerable progress can be made? Patriotism has been much too cheap with us. To some it has brought profit, to many it has been the means of social distinction and honour, to the great crowds it has afforded generous excitement. Now few have really suffered in body and in mind,—loss of life, liberty, wealth, etc.! There has practically been no political persecution at all in India. I confess I was not quite pleased to read that Lajpat Rai seemed greatly depressed and crestfallen. If he could not have sincerely rejoiced to have been enabled to suffer for the country, he ought to show by his manly bearing and dignified self-possession that Indians know, and are prepared to meet with resolution and grimness, the fate that awaits the first patriots that lift up their voice, pen, or sword against tyranny.

subtly logical, which were wafted by the soft evening breeze to tens of thousands of listeners, invading their whole souls and setting them aflame with the fever of a wild consuming desire. Oratory had never dreamed of such triumphs in India; the power of the spoken word had never been demonstrated on such a scale: The immediate effect was to deepen and strengthen the discontent already in existence, and to embitter a hundred-fold the controversies that divided the two political schools.' (From Mr Sastri's introduction to the first edition of Mr Natesan's collection of Gokhale's speeches and writings.)

But I recognize at the same time the different parts that men have to play in this bewildering drama. For instance, my sympathy goes out even now to Mr Morley. I wonder if you or I would have done any better.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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SERVANTS OF INDIA HOME, POONA CITY

27th May 1907

My dear Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar

I see you have invited a storm over your head.<sup>3</sup> I am very glad you have touched the missionaries by your appeal. Much good may not come of it; but it was necessary.

That the extreme party are responsible for the present unrest is not so clear to me; nor do I think that statement altogether politic from one whom Europeans have learned to look upon as a leader of the Indian community. But it is time we denounced the participation of students in active politics and saved both.

Mr Gokhale has written to you, and means to write again. He will return from Mahabaleshwar on the 1st

<sup>3</sup> This letter has reference to a speech which Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar delivered on 22nd May 1907 to a conference of missionaries. Discussing at Kodaikanal the unrest of those days he said that 'the real cause of the present agitation was the extremist party'. 'He had no patience with those who encouraged school boys to take part in politics.' Mr Pal had spoken only a few days previously in Madras, inciting students to boycott schools and colleges and to adopt extreme forms of agitation.

of June; we have already been asked to reconcile ourselves to separation from him at the end of the month; so that this year he will spend barely one month with the members of the Society. But the work that claims him is the Society's work, and we give him, as he asks, with joy and enthusiasm.

Shall I add a personal item? Mr G. reading your letters, exclaimed: 'It is really wonderful, this man's intellect; acute and at the same time massive; I mean it strikes you at once as altogether superior,' or words to that effect.

I note them only because I feel flattered that my judgement receives confirmation from a competent authority. Excuse this play.

As ever, with esteem and love, Yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY, POONA CITY

, 21st June 1907

My dear Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar

Mr Gokhale stays here till the 28th instant, when he will go to Kagal where his brother's obsequies are performing. He may return after an absence of four days.

As soon as he came back, he told me he was going to shut himself up for a few days and not admit any company except that of newspapers and a few favourite authors. I thought he needed it, he looked so pale and careworn. But in a few hours he had thrown this caution to the winds. Visitors came to condole, and the Budget Speech and the local Council's sitting and the rules for

the office of *India* which Mr Devadhar has elaborated with care,—these and sundry other matters drew him out of his seclusion, until at present he moves about almost as usual. I began to think he was taking it all bravely, and ventured to make the remark casually, when he told me he suffered terribly in mind and could not sleep at all. Then he began for the second time to recount what his brother had been to him, how he had brought him up from childhood and undergone much worry on his account, how the relations between them had been always most loving and affectionate without the slightest jar on any occasion, and how during these last years he had been enabled by the deceased's willingness to bear all burdens to banish from his mind all thought of family and all care of children even during the plague. This narration brought tears into his eyes, and even mine began to fill, dry as they generally are, and as if by common impulse we parted.

He saw *Sastrial* in your letter and playfully blamed me for not correcting his usual address of *Sastri*. On the subject of your letter, however, nothing has yet passed between us.

I must confess I put too much faith in that telegraphic summary. Your report alters the complexion of things materially. I rejoice most sincerely that you were able to make such a good impression on the European part of the audience. Who will not respond to genuine earnestness and power? Even where direct self-interest prevents full compliance, sympathy and tolerance are yielded.

I must now hasten to tell you of Sir P. M. Mehta's latest act of prowess. At the recent Council meeting at

Poona (the day before yesterday) the Hon. Mr Parekh read a well-reasoned and powerful indictment of the oppressive and cruel way in which the land assessment had been collected. This was too much for a Mr Logan, Bombay Customs Collector. He made a violent speech, denouncing Congress orators (and their political propaganda), who represented the interests of the landlord and the sowcar in the Council, while the poor voiceless ryot had only himself and another gentleman who could be trusted to safeguard his interests. The country was increasing in prosperity, and the ryots were well off except when the landlords oppressed them. They were quite able to pay the taxes, but were occasionally contumacious and recalcitrant, because they were encouraged and incited by people who inculcated habits of dishonesty. He entirely disapproved of the India Government's policy of leniency in regard to suspension and remission of taxes. The few real cases of revenue officers' oppression were inevitable, owing to the innumerable instances of fraud and dishonesty with which they had to deal. The sowcar took between 12 and 60 per cent interest from the bleeding and starving peasant; and yet here were people who never said a word about him recommending leniency, mercy, and all that to Government, which advanced loans at  $6\frac{1}{4}\%$ . And so on through the stock arguments of the worst civilian. The tone and manner of the speech were most irritating, and I felt strongly tempted to box his ears then and there. After two or three others had spoken or read stupid essays, Mr Mehta's turn came. He rose with alacrity and addressed two sentences rather fast to H. E. and his councillors on the right and the left. I could not catch the words, but fancied (wrongly, I find) they might allude in some caustic manner to the caucus

episode.<sup>4</sup> Then came his time-honoured joke of ploughing the sands. With his genial smile he blamed Setalvad, Parekh and Ibrahim Rahimtoollah for having deprived him of all the materials of his speech. However, the Hon. Mr Logan had earned his gratitude by furnishing much matter for an effort on his part. Then he assumed a severe manner, made his face rigid, and raised his voice. His gestures became abrupt and violent, so much so that the Council seemed to feel uneasy. The Bombay Revenue Officer, he said, is the Bourbon; he never learns and he never forgets. Time after time his pet theories have been exploded, his methods have been condemned, and his acts have been reversed. Still he persists in his oppression. He continues to believe as firmly as ever in his infallibility, and has no patience with his critics. He imputes motives and abuses. How long is this to go on? The Government of India lays down rules in vain; even the severe castigation of the Macdonnel<sup>5</sup> Commission has had no effect. What facts has the Hon. Mr Logan to urge in support of his strictures? None whatever. He merely trots out the old, old Anglo-Indian stories of prosperity budgets and prosperous people. Who does not see through this trick nowadays? We all know the origin of these surpluses. They are the result of the currency policy which indirectly taxes the agriculturist. Having taken from the poor man both directly and indirectly

4 Sir P. M. Mehta's ascendancy in the Corporation of Bombay had roused much jealousy in certain sections including officials, and a powerful caucus was formed to oust him, but failed in the end.

5 Sir Antony Macdonnel was President of a Commission of inquiry into the condition of ryots in the Deccan, of which the report made far-seeing and sympathetic recommendations, and was often quoted by our politicians.



a great deal more than he can give or you need, you turn round and say he is prosperous. People paid their taxes in Guzerat easily enough twenty years ago. Yes, it is true. But why? Mr Logan says people were not contumacious and dishonest as they have since become. The fact is, *as he himself knows*, there were no famines at all in Guzerat twenty years ago. Why should ryots object to pay when they easily could? Mr L. says that orators (I suppose he means us of the Congress party) inculcate habits of dishonesty. *I strongly resent it, and I throw it back in his face.* He accuses us of representing the landlord and the sowcar, and calls himself the champion of the ryot. Did he or any Bombay Revenue Officer stand up for the ryot on this occasion? Or on that? (mentioning two). You play the *ma bap* when it suits you and give him over when it does not suit you. Then as to the sowcar, it is positive ingratitude for Government to persecute him. He has enabled the constant stream of revenue to flow into the public coffers. His absolute necessity in the economy of the village has been admitted on high authority. It is not quite fair to accuse him of exacting high interest, and to compare him with Government in this respect. In lending out money he has to face enormous risks and must charge high rates. Government has a system of grind and thorough which brings the maximum money for minimum expenditure. I have felt it necessary to address these remarks because the Hon. Mr L. has expressed offensive sentiments in a particularly offensive manner. I have now done with him. Let me now turn to the Hon. Mr Armstrong. And here his expression relaxed and his manner grew gentle, and he frequently smiled on Mr Armstrong as he looked at him. The contrast was quite striking. Mr L. sat stunned all

the time and his eyes grew red. Only after Mr Mehta had done with him he bent down a bit and muttered some words now and then. He looked the picture of misery. H. E. and Council had one eye on Mr M. and the other on Mr L. One could read anxiety on every face. Mr M. uttered *Bombay Revenue Officer* about twenty times and *political propaganda* about fifteen times. I felt a thrill as he said: "I resent it strongly and I throw it back in his face." In one word, it made me proud that there was a man who could stand up to the full height and speak as an injured gentleman should speak to the injurer. If only each province had two or three such men! When I told Mr Gokhale of it he felt elated, and exclaimed more than once, "Only Mr Mehta can do it, Oh! he is the man for it." After the sitting was over, H. E. came over to where Mr M. sat, and spoke a few words, as if to show that he cherished no ill-will. Then Mr M. moved away, but coming to where Mr L. was standing, turned back sharp, Mr L., as if by the same impulse, turning back on his part.

Today Mr Khare began by a feeble attack on Mr L. Nothing particular has happened till lunch. Mr Selby made a very good speech. (Council has resumed.)

Sir Steyning Edgerley, Junior Member, did not refer to the episode, except when he made a passing remark: "In my unregenerate days when I was a Bombay Revenue Officer." The Senior Member, Mr Muir Mackenzie, took it up seriously and confirmed every one of the obnoxious statements of Mr Logan. The only thing he did was to exempt the members of the Legislative Council from the charge of inculcating habits of dishonesty. "Out of this Council plenty of such persons," he said: and when he

instanced the paper *Vande Mataram*, Mr Mehta promptly stood up and asked whether he was speaking of Bombay Province or the whole of India. "Of Bombay Province," answered Mr Muir Mackenzie in a deliberate manner. The controversy, he wound up by saying, need not disturb private and personal relations. H. E. said he enjoyed the exciting passage-at-arms. In the peculiar conditions of political controversy in India, Government never finds a champion outside its own ranks. But it is unavoidable. In the present instance though there was warmth on both sides, H. E. felt sure, each combatant was armed in triple brass, so that no serious danger need be apprehended.

As I read over the letter I find I have not reproduced Mr M.'s language with any approach to faithfulness, but the substance is all right. His expressions were a trifle stronger, I should fancy, and when he uttered them in his emphatic manner, they seemed forcible.

I will stop now as it is 8 o'clock.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

POONA CITY

9th August 1908.

My dear Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar

I am glad to report that after my coming here a full programme of work has been arranged. Besides studies particular to each member, there are two meetings a week at one of which a paper is read, and at the other a debate conducted. On a recent occasion Patwardhan condemned Mr Morley's administration (you know he has decided

extremist leanings); and I had to defend Mr M. at some length. The debate had become lively and had to be adjourned. The day before it was to be resumed, the Gaekwar,<sup>6</sup> who was a guest of H. E. here, sent for Patwardhan, our Resident Member, and learning that there was to be a debate next day, offered to attend it. We didn't congratulate Patwardhan on the result of his interview, but what was to be done? A mere continuation would have been dull, for Chatterji can't speak at all, Dravid has few words, and the rest are youngsters. We held a council of war, and it was decided that the debate should begin *de novo*, I leading the attack on Morley and a Professor of Fergusson College, an associate of our Society, following with a vindication. I was not willing to argue against my convictions, but I was overborne on the questionable ground that a debate was a debate and its laws allowed unfelt advocacy as an academic exercise. Punctually at 8 a.m. H. H. was seen driving in a Government House motor, and in a quarter of an hour after entering our premises, took his seat at the head of the debating table, having refused tea and refreshments, which had been arranged at some cost, for he said he had come to hear the debate and not to drink tea. I must say he put us at ease in a moment by the simple, direct and businesslike way in which he asked us to begin. Dravid, who presides at all meetings in virtue of his seniority, bade me lead. After explaining that I was running down Mr Morley in the pure spirit of debate, I made what I flatter myself was a delicate allusion to the illustrious visitor and proceeded to handle the partition,<sup>7</sup> the deporta-

6 The late Sayaji Rao Gaekwar, one of the ablest, boldest, and most progressive princes in the country.

7 Of Bengal.

tion,<sup>8</sup> the repression, and so on through the whole list. I affected to judge him by the highest standard of the philosopher-statesman, and allowing that he was seeking to conciliate the bureaucracy and obtain their hearty support to a liberal measure of reform, where was the guarantee, I asked, that he would not find himself at the end in the position of one who had given away his all and got nothing in return? For the bureaucracy is like a wanton with an insatiable appetite for the homage and gifts of love in any measure. At the end I referred to the inevitable peerage. Magnanimously I allowed the plea to pass that not love of office or greed of lucre, but a severe sense of duty, made him seek an asylum in the Upper House as the only condition of his keeping the Indian portfolio. But then came my master-stroke. May not one remind the new peer, I asked, that, if on the one hand we are none of us infallible, not even the youngest of us, on the other hand, we are none of us indispensable, not even the oldest of us? I sat down at this point, unwilling to mar the effect of this most unanswerably confounding question. I had been on my feet exactly twenty minutes, the time previously fixed by Dravid. The Gaekwar was greatly pleased—with the manner, I am sure, rather than with the matter, of my speech. After a word of praise, he asked to see my notes, which consisted of about ten key-words on a slip of paper written in large hand in consideration of my long sight. The Fergusson Professor put forth a serious effort, demolishing my positions with elaborate arguments. He spoke for more than half an hour, and, I must say, his defence was both able and thorough. But the most sober and convincing answer will

8 Of Lala Lajpat Rai in 1907.

not avail against a clever and biting jest. And so the Professor's heavy artillery did little or no execution. At any rate the Gaekwar had had enough of the debate, and as if catching a hint from his speech, began a conversation on Village Panchayat. Of course *his* experiments, *his* difficulties, *his* sympathies, were in evidence; but one was struck with the extent and intimacy of the Prince's knowledge of affairs. H. H. has also great tact and knows how to make himself agreeable. "You are quite right", "Therein I agree", "Exactly", "Oh, yes, of course", he would say frequently, but that was the certain precursor of a serious qualification, objection, or difficulty. Education, wide popular education, lay at the bottom of everything; and great work lay before us, Servants of India, if the coming reforms were to be beneficial and permanent. When the conversation had led up to that natural close, H. H. left, but not without saying twice over that he wanted very much to repeat his visit on some future occasion. Directly his car rolled away, somebody—I am not sure it was not me—cried "To the tea!" and I am ashamed to say we fell on the table like famished dogs, and biscuits, apples, mangoes, figs, and plantains disappeared almost in the twinkling of an eye, leaving the white cloth and plates and cups in a condition that would have broken the heart of a housewife. Luckily we had only Gopal<sup>9</sup> in her place; he with Moru, Dhondi, Dagudu, and one or two others of euphonious names—but you won't care to hear of their elegant doings.

I am at present reading of the Russian movement of the last few decades. We have many books on the subject

9 Gokhale's cook.

written from the revolutionist or anarchist point of view. Most absorbing to be sure; but not to be recommended by any means to the young or susceptible. I had scarcely an adequate notion of the heroisms, the martyrdoms, the grim resolves that illustrate the annals of revolt. There is a directness, a dread earnestness, a sublime spurning of the mere comforts and decencies of settled social life that seem of a different world altogether. What a thing is this humanity! What infinite possibilities it has, what contrasts, what marvels! If we could but lift ourselves from the slough of smug respectability and regularised order of our society, we might have a taste, hot and unforgettable, of real life as it is lived in a world of daring aspiration, ceaseless endeavour, and delirious excitement and uncertainty. The fascination amounts to a vertigo and to feeble and enthusiastic natures may be irresistible.

Breathing the atmosphere of wholesale executions and banishments and inhuman tortures, the sentences of Mr Pinhey on Chidambaram and Siva<sup>10</sup> don't throw me into any transports of surprise or resentment, but to the great mass of people they must be simply overwhelming. The judge's summing-up contains many sentiments which must be challenged. I don't know whether a statement in clear terms of the judge's own opinion amounts to a misdirection; but I suppose the point is scarcely worth discussing in a case of assessors. I have a suspicion that the inclusion of Chidambaram among the bombthrowing anarchists by the King's evidence at Calcutta—Bessumber is only a variation of Chidambar to give a touch of

10 Mr V. O. Chidambaram Pillai and Mr K. Subrahmanya Siva were two of the active politicians whom Mr Pinhey, Sessions Judge of Tinnevely, had sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

reality—may have influenced the mind of the judge in determining the sentence. Certain remarks of Justice Davar too in the *Kal* case seem to augur the utmost severity as regards Tilak. I should not be surprised if he be transported and his press confiscated. Whatever you may say, that would remove a great figure from the field of politics: it would ring down the curtain on a tragedy of deep pathos and profound moral significance. God's ways are many.

I fear the bomb disclosures and the Press prosecutions in Bengal and Bombay will postpone indefinitely the beginning of Congress work. People here are unable to bring their minds to think of anything besides Mr Tilak. What is Madras doing? Why not organize the Provincial Committee in the City? It is then that the Dt. Committees must be thought of. It would be well to call a preliminary meeting of the actual workers and settle the details. It would be a shame if Congress met the first year<sup>11</sup> on an improperly or imperfectly worked constitution. Let Madras set a good example in this matter. For my part I am ready to go if required. But I shall leave only after the 15th of August, as I have given my word to that effect to Mr Gokhale, and as I find my presence useful in carrying out the programme of the Society for this session.

Believe me, as ever, Yours affectionately  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

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<sup>11</sup> The first under the Convention Constitution after the Surat Split.



POONA CITY

25th July 1908

My dear Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar

I was in Bombay during the last three days of the trial. When the catastrophe was reached at the end of an extraordinary night sitting lasting till 10 o'clock, and Justice Davar bit out his sentence in slow solemn tones amid death-like silence, the effect on us was so crushing that we—I mean Dravid and I—left Bombay precipitately, causing no longer delay than was necessary to pick up our things. In the hurry I left my spectacles behind and have been unable during the last two days to read or write. This morning I bought a cheap pair in the bazaar, and am straining through them to write a few letters.

Yesterday we had a long letter from Mr Gokhale. We wrote back promptly,—adding a request that he should use his influence with Morley and others to secure Mr Tilak something like the considerate treatment accorded to political prisoners.

I needn't say that Poona lies prostrate under the blow, which is felt in every home. The one thought of every one is the great gap left in the ranks of public men. No single man can take his place here. The *Gnan Prakash* forgot old quarrels and paid the fallen hero a generous tribute. Mrs Tilak's condition, she has had acute diabetes for some weeks, threatens to add a tragic touch to the situation. Tilak himself, manfully as he bore himself throughout and clear as his voice rang as he called on the higher powers that guided the destinies of nations, looked greatly pulled down by age, diabetes and the terrible strain of the last fortnight, and few hope to see him alive at

the end of his exile. In the general depression, however, a clever young lawyer bids us cheer up. The misjoinder of trials under different sections is a radical error, says he: and as he read to us the different sections of the Cr. P. C. dealing with misjoinders, we thought the matter so patent that we suspected something deeper as we couldn't conceive of a High Court Judge making such a mistake. "But you don't know Davar," says he, "and we lawyers generally prepare legal traps in these trials." We could only open our lips in ignorant wonder!

Yours affectionately as ever

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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*Confidential.*

POONA CITY

22nd June 1903

My dear Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar

I am greatly touched to hear Gokhale talk of you. He says he feels like a brother towards you, and delights to think of your goodness and kindness to him.

We should have liked a line about your wife's condition. Indeed I read with concern the other day of your having been kept from the public meeting regarding the Railway strike. You looked poorly too when I took leave.

Mr Gokhale's malady—he won't like my telling you, but I can't keep it from you—is passing through what he fears may prove an acute phase. He *looks* all right, and I shouldn't have suspected anything wrong if he didn't frequently allude to it. He says he doesn't want to, but can't help sliding into the topic. An eminent English doctor has told him that diabetes goes smoothly for some

years, but once it takes a wrong turn, may gallop and finish the patient in a short time. Once he measured the quantity of urine passed in twenty-four hours: it was four times the maximum compatible with health. He feels weak in body and in mind. But he sleeps much,—too much he thinks. Next week he will go to Bombay to consult the famous Dr Rao. He asks me what will happen to the Society after him, and whether it will turn out that he has been too bold to start it. ‘I will do all I can’ while I live; but you get Krishnaswami to take it up after me, will you?’

One great cause of his condition is the embarrassment of our finance. The Press<sup>12</sup> has been mismanaged all this time, and though nothing is beyond repair, I fear we are very much to the worse. Matters have been nearly put right, but at what cost to the health and peace of mind of Mr G., I may best describe by saying that he once said he realised the condition of those that commit suicide.

Yours as ever, in love,

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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17, SYDOJI LANE, TRIPPLICANE

27th July 1911

My dear Friend

My house was full of a great presence for three days,<sup>13</sup> it is now empty and I seem to have closed a bright episode of life.

12 The Arya Bhushan Press, belonging to the Society.

13 Mr Gokhale stayed with Mr Sastri during his visit on account of his Elementary Education Bill.

The whole city was happy. The *Madras Times* was all for Gokhale. The *Mail* forgot its old antipathy to the Elementary Education Bill and blessed it. The *Patriot* and the *Standard* forgot themselves for joy. Only the *Hindu* sat in a corner and cursed between its lips.

Mr Gokhale visited many persons. Among them was Mr G. Subramania Aiyar. This was a kindly act of recognition and Mr G. deserves praise.

Your carriage was used on one occasion, the jost fan was used for a few hours.

Mani and Narayanaswami<sup>14</sup> ate with us when Mr G. had his last meal here.

If you had been here and his daughter had not been ill, Mr G.'s happiness would have been complete.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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<sup>14</sup> Son and son-in-law of Mr K. Aiyar.

## SOME MONTAGU LETTERS

BY THE RT. HON'BLE V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI

After great hesitation I have decided to publish a selection of letters written to me by the late Mr E. S. Montagu. Of the propriety of my doing so, there will always be question. My object is to enable the reader to realise how anxious he was to understand our mind and how thoroughly he identified himself with the cause of India. The use of the first person plural in writing and speaking of the people of India was a constant habit with him. During the Imperial Conference of 1921 we sat next to each other and exchanged notes most of the time. The greater part of these were destroyed, but occasionally he would snatch some and thrust them impulsively into his pocket, while I took hold of others.

### I

(During the discussion of the former Anglo-Japanese Treaty, the idea of a Conference of Pacific powers was occasionally mooted. It was taken for granted that representatives of the Dominions would attend, but mention was not made of India at first. Being equally sensitive of her Dominion status, we consulted together. In the result I put in a claim, which was allowed when the composition of the British delegation at the Reduction of Naval Armament Conference at Washington was settled.)

S.:—Are you going to ask to be allowed to hold a watching brief at this Pacific Conference, if not a place as an interested party?

M.:—No. I think we must ask that we have a place on the Conference. We are vitally interested in Pacific navies and our relations with Japan.

S.:—Quite. Don't you think you should put in your claim early enough? Nobody seems to think of India in that light, so far.

M.:—Put it in.

## II

(I supported a protest that had been received from Bombay merchants against the proposal to transfer Aden to the Colonial Office. The boldness of the plan to control that office by subvention to be annually voted by the Legislative Assembly took my breath away.)

Yes, I think there is a lot of sense in protests of this kind.

*But* if I can get assurances that as a result India will be consulted about Colonial Office policy in the Middle East and equal treatment for Indians, and if I can save money, I should not oppose transfer.

At present Aden costs us about £400,000 and we pay for Persian Gulf, and certain subsidies to Arab Chiefs.

I am considering a scheme of agreeing to pay £350,000 annually for five years for Aden and Persian Gulf and subsidies to be voted annually by Indian Legislature so that we save about £100,000 a year and can always refuse what will be a subvention to C. O. unless she treated Indians well throughout her orbit.

## III

(Mr Winston Churchill, then Colonial Secretary, made one of his thundering pronouncements adverse to our claims in Kenya. I was in serious alarm and had a sleepless night. Little did either of us dream how much the position would deteriorate in two years and how much better for the Empire, for India and

for Kenya it would have been if the matter had been composed before the Duke of Devonshire and Lord Peel took it over. Montagu was a great admirer of Mr Churchill.)

I read your letter.

I agree that Churchill's methods are not nice. We have to pay the price of genius and his failing is inability when he talks to leave out anything which is bubbling in his mind.

But I think, after a sleepless night, that we must not minimise what we have gained or risk losing it, for the Colonists are very angry.

After all it is tremendous: community of franchise, abolition of segregation, promise that in the future there will be nothing of the kind again attempted. The Indians in the legislature and economic pressure will one day remove the one outstanding question—and after all it is past history in one sense. That does not mean that I am not taking steps in the matter, I am going to fight. But we must not lose perspective.

#### IV

(The sadness of our case in South Africa may be imagined if General Smuts is our best friend there. Yet it is a fact, as a recent turn of events has proved. We left out no method of conciliation.)

I think I should say sometime or other

I want to make it clear that I believe

(1) that General Smuts is the best friend we have in S. African public life.

(2) That Indians' only chance of what they want in S. Africa is to be loyal citizens of the Empire—outside it we should have no chance.

We therefore do not want to create difficulties for him and we want his help in binding India to the Empire.

## V

(This was a hint to me just before I moved the draft resolution on our overseas status. Our loyalty, however, was never questioned during the discussion.)

I hope you will not forget that the best way of ensuring support from Mr Meighen,<sup>1</sup> Mr Massey,<sup>2</sup> etc. is to emphasise the loyalty which I know you feel to the British Empire and citizenship. I hear people are making the most of attempts to persuade Empire that India is less loyal to the common purpose than the others.

## VI

(Mr Montagu was ill at the time the Maharao of Cutch and I received the freedom of London, and his place at the luncheon was taken by Lord Lytton, then the Indian Under-Secretary. The letter shows how hard it was even to get a day for the hearing of the Indian case.)

INDIA OFFICE, WHITEHALL, S. W. 1

✓ 29th July 1921

Dear Mr Sastri

I send you a hasty note from my bed for three purposes:

- (1) to thank you for coming to enquire for me;
- (2) to congratulate you upon your speech at the Guildhall, and to thank you for your references to me; and
- (3) to urge you to get a definite appointment for Indians in the Dominions before the Conference adjourns this week. Next week is the last week. It is so vital to us; I think you must insist that a day be appointed

1 Prime Minister of Canada.

2 Prime Minister of New Zealand.



now, and I should say it ought to be Thursday or Wednesday.

Would you ask Mr Brown to communicate to me the result of your efforts?

Yours sincerely  
EDWIN S. MONTAGU

## VII

*Private*

INDIA OFFICE, WHITEHALL, S. W. 1.

✓ 8th March 1922

My dear Mr Sastri

In reflecting upon our conversations before you left London, I feel that I did not fully convey to you my sense of appreciation of your services to your country and the Empire whilst you have been over here. You have not only acquired for India a new reception in the councils of the world, but I think you will carry back with you a true appreciation of the fact that I wish your countrymen would learn that hate begets bitterness, that the English want to serve India, and that a real and dignified co-operation does not mean the abandonment, or even the postponing, but rather the acceleration of nationalist aspirations, and must meet—and does meet—with response from my fellow-countrymen. I have to thank you for much help, and feel grateful for much sympathy. I think you realise the difficulties of my task, and the assistance that you have rendered me has been much appreciated by me and will reinforce me in my work.

The best of luck attend you in the life that you have dedicated to the service of your country and of the Empire.

Yours sincerely  
EDWIN S. MONTAGU

## VIII

*Private.*

4, GORDON PLACE, BLOOMSBURY, MUSEUM 7387

5th March 1923

My dear Mr Sastri

I beg to acknowledge receipt of your letter of the 8th February, with many thanks. I need hardly tell you with what satisfaction I received the generous resolution passed by the Liberal Federation, and I hope you will find some suitable method and opportunity of conveying to the members of your organisation my grateful thanks for their message.

I think you will always find that an Upper Chamber lags behind a Lower Chamber, except in moments of crisis. It is certainly true in this country of the House of Lords, but there come times when the Upper Chamber re-establishes itself without difficulty, and plays a vital part in the fortunes of its country by finding opportunities for action denied to the Lower Chamber. This is certainly true not only in this country but in America, and I have no doubt that it will be found to be so in India. Of course your presence in the Upper House, and your consequent absence from the Lower one, must be a source of great impatience to you. So it would be for Mr Churchill to find himself in the House of Lords here. But there is this difference in the position, that whereas you may at any moment find a means of remedying the situation, unless our Upper Chamber is reformed inclusion in it is permanent.

I find myself very distressed at the attitude which you gentlemen are taking up in India on the Civil Services, but it is no use my attempting to get you to agree with

me, for one of the bitter reflections which I carry with me in my retirement is this, that I have always failed to get a consistent acceptance of my advice, even from my political friends in India; and the generosity of their appreciation of my services, which reaches me from time to time, is only measured by the frequency with which they differ from and reject my opinion. I desire to place in writing before you, in order that in after years you may remember it, my conviction that the progress of India to self-government must be hampered by the absence of a reform in the organisation of the Civil Services, and that the work which Lord Chelmsford and I accomplished in India is incomplete until that reorganisation occurs. We altered the political constitution of India and gave a new trend and direction to the future, but we left untouched the executive organisation. That executive organisation has got to be fitted into the new order of things, and until this is accomplished the existing and now anachronistic organisation will always prove to be, and be quoted as, an obstacle to progress, even although a general acceptance of the new ideal characterises the members of the Services. This reorganisation cannot be accomplished without an enquiry, and that enquiry ought to be speedily undertaken. You will never get a subordination of the Services to the Governments in India rather than to the Secretary of State without enquiry. You will never be able to determine the method of recruitment, the tests for recruitment, the period of recruitment for each individual, the age or ages at which people are required, the general alteration of the Services from a governing caste to an executive agency without enquiry and authoritative recommendations. I do not say that a Royal Commission is the best way to achieve this, nor do I argue

that the method of presentment of the enquiry either here or in India is the way that I would have chosen. But I do say that if I had been a member of the Legislative Assembly I should have received the announcement in a very different way from that in which it has been received. I should have warned the Government that reforms of pay must be conditional on a reorganisation which made the Services an instrument of the Reforms Act and its developments; that India was not going to pay money to entrench the Services in an existing organisation out of harmony with recent alterations; that the cost of alterations in pay would naturally depend upon the reorganisation which was achieved; and that it would be a comparatively simple matter to adjust the recommendations of the Islington Commission to the new organisation without a new prolonged enquiry on that subject. I think I should have added that it was the duty of the Assembly to recommend to the Secretary of State that the new enquiry should be manned partly or predominantly—(I am not now speaking as an ex-Secretary of State, but I am assuming the role of a member of the Legislative Assembly)—from the Legislative Assembly itself. However, I will not bother you with any more on this subject.

With renewed expressions of thanks, I am

Yours very sincerely,

EDWIN S. MONTAGU

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## GANDHI—SASTRI LETTERS

We publish here for the first time a considerable body of Sastri—Gandhi correspondence. It is a pity that some of the linking letters are not now available. The letters, as they go, reveal a unique friendship which has so stood the strain of the deepest differences of outlook that it may almost be said to belong to the world of romance.

If for keen criticism, elevation of thought and literary flavour Mr Sastri's letters are remarkable, Gandhiji's stand out as marvels of tender feeling. Sastriar, who never fails to recognise Gandhiji's magnanimity ('Magnanimity, Thy name is Gandhi' was one of his touching telegrams to the Mahatma) wrote to a friend (in 1932), 'Gandhiji heaps coals of fire on my head.' To another friend he wrote (in 1932): 'No. I don't approve of your publishing those letters. Gandhi's letters to me are so full of love people will suspect me of vanity if I give them to the press. Mine are rather free and may sound harsh in strange ears; they are not sufficiently worshipful.'

### SJT. MAHADEVA DESAI'S NOTE ON GANDHI—SASTRI FRIENDSHIP

In a letter full of fine ideas finely expressed Sjt Mahadeva Desai authorized me to publish this correspondence. I give portions of it to the reader:—

'There are very few men in our public life possessed of his (Sastriar's) versatility and his wonderful mastery of the English language. Purists there are many, but none who has Sastriar's mastery of the speech and the

pen. There are a good many who have his eloquence, but none of these can come near him in his acuteness of perception, wisdom, and knowledge of affairs. What Johnson said of Burke may be truly said of Sastriar: "He is an extraordinary man. His stream of mind is perpetual." And I am glad that you are garnering the great treasures of that stream.

' You want me to say a word about the Sastriar—Gandhi friendship. Is it needed? The correspondence you are publishing is an eloquent commentary upon it. "Closest friendships can subsist," says Gandhiji, "between persons of contrary temperaments. As the public know, Sastri and I have opposite views on many important questions. Our mutual regard and affection have never suffered on that account. There is no reason whatsoever why the same rule cannot be extended to parties and groups representing opposite schools of opinion..... Would that the affection subsisting between Sastri and me might prove so deep and extensive as to reach and affect the whole society! "

' The foundation of that affection is something deeper than personal friendship. It is charity that never fails—charity that always endeavours to understand the truth in the opposite side. And both have that virtue in an ample measure. Both Sastriar and Gandhiji are votaries of truth, but truth has a thousand facets, and it is therefore natural that while Sastriar's vision of truth bids him go 'thus far and no further', Gandhiji's vision drives him unshrinkingly on to positions which often alarm his dearest friends. Turning casually over the pages of an autograph album given me for signing, I came across once a page containing Sastriar's signature under the following

Biblical saying: "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good." That would seem to be Sastriar's motto. As against it I may say Gandhiji's motto would be: "Faith is the evidence of things not seen." The one shrinks from positions because he needs must prove all things; the other marches fearlessly on from the known to the unknown in faith which is the evidence of things not seen. But the indissoluble bond of charity binds them. Even though he differ violently from Gandhiji, Sastriar has boundless faith in his earnestness and sincerity, and he believes that even when he seems to him to err, he errs in good faith and with the readiness ever to be corrected. If all friendships were founded on that solid rock, they would surely endure until the end of time and stand the strain of the sharpest differences. I can only hope and pray with Gandhiji that this deep spiritual friendship—'spiritual' because based on a grasp of the deeper things of the spirit—may spread like the leaven in the lump of our public life and ultimately the whole of our social fabric.'

#### THE LATE C. F. ANDREWS ON GANDHI—SASTRI FRIENDSHIP

The following quotation from C. F. Andrews's article on Mr Sastri in *Cape Times*, October 22nd 1927, may be apposite here:—

'The parting of the ways came after the war was over; for when Mr Gandhi adopted the non-co-operation policy towards the Government as a means of gaining redress for the things that had been done at Amritsar and elsewhere in the Punjab, Mr Sastri refused to join with Mr Gandhi and continued co-operation with the Government of India.

' There could hardly be a greater cleavage than this; and it proved itself to be a great strain on the mutual friendship and fellowship between the members of each organisation. At first, Mr Gandhi's followers began to clamour loudly against the followers of Mr Sastri and refused even to give them a hearing on public platforms; but Mr Gandhi, with great nobility of spirit, entirely prohibited any such boycott of Mr Sastri and spoke in the warmest terms possible of his love and friendship for the leader who differed from him. In this way, even though the cleavage between the two political leaders had been made, the personal friendship remained entirely unbroken throughout. Mr Sastri never forgot Mr Gandhi's magnanimity; and there is no one in the whole of India to-day whom Mr Sastri reveres more than Mr Gandhi.

' In later years, since Mr Gandhi's long imprisonment at the height of the non-co-operation movement, Mr Sastri has drawn even nearer still to Mr Gandhi in intimate personal friendship. It is supremely interesting to note that when Mr Gandhi was very near to death and a critical operation was immediately required, which might or might not prove fatal, at that crisis the doctor asked him, before the operation, what friend he would wish to be with him and to receive any message he might wish to give before the operation was begun. Mr Gandhi immediately asked for Mr Sastri, and for a short time those two Indian leaders held personal communion together at that most anxious moment of all, when Mr Gandhi's own life was hanging by a thread.

' The latter has often told me how great was the joy with which he met Mr Sastri at that hour when he had only a slight expectation of being able to get through the operation with success.'



To this may be added an extract from Mr Sastri's letter of August 3, 1939 to C. F. Andrews: "Did you observe—so little escapes your eye—that Gunther in his new book<sup>1</sup> describes me as an old friend of Gandhi? He says nothing more. Why need he? I am content".

## EARLY GANDHI LETTERS

TOLSTOY FARM, LAWLEY STATION, TRANSVAAL

3rd November 1912

Dear Mr Shastriar<sup>2</sup>

I have heard so much of you that I almost feel we know each other: hence the familiar style.

Mr Gokhale is taking rest for a day or two here—such as he can get after a most strenuous fortnight.\*\* He has therefore commissioned me to write to you. The receptions throughout the tour have been very flattering. Europeans—many prominent leaders—have taken part in them as you will see from the papers sent to the Society. In my opinion Mr Gokhale's mission is bound to be fruitful. Mr Gokhale's speeches have been much appreciated everywhere. Owing to bad service to India, Mr Gokhale's plans have to be altered. He will now sail by *S. S. Umkuzi* leaving Durban on the 20th instant and reaching Colombo about the 7th December. Will you please be on the look-out? Mr Gokhale would like Mr Ranganathan to meet him at Colombo and would like you to join him at Madras.

\*\* I have insisted on Mr Gokhale taking the rest he needs.

1 "Inside Asia".

2 This is obviously the first letter that Gandhiji wrote to Sastriar.

Passage has not yet been booked. Ere this reaches you a cable will be sent giving exact particulars.

I am Yours truly

M. K. GANDHI

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AHMEDABAD

13th January 1916

Dear Mr Shastriar

You have anticipated me. I had told Dr. Deva<sup>3</sup> that I would place my conclusions before you, if possible, during the Congress week. I was unable to do so. Now, however, that the members have already begun to consider the question, perhaps it is unnecessary for me to set forth my conclusions. The members are coming to a just decision in not having me as a member. Whilst there is possibility of co-operation when we are working independently, I can see that I would, as a member, become a disturbing factor. The methods of the Society as such are so totally different from mine in many respects. Our common discipleship would constitute an indissoluble bond though we would be following out Mr Gokhale's work from different view-points.<sup>4</sup>

I am Yours sincerely

M. K. GANDHI

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3 Then Secretary of the Society.

4 Gandhiji writes in "*My Experiments with Truth*"—"I saw clearly that, when there was such a sharp division amongst the members of the society over admitting me, by far the best

TRIPLICANE

21st January 1916

My dear Doctor (Deva)

I am enclosing a letter from Mr Gandhi, which, as at my request, please communicate to members of Council and to all heads of Branches for perusal and communication to members.

You will see Mr Gandhi has been magnanimous enough to anticipate our verdict and relieve us of a delicate task. It is like him and I take it as a great proof of his affection for the Society.

I have suggested to him that there should be no public announcement of this decision, but that the public should learn of it slowly and as they may.

Yours sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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BOMBAY

18th March 1920

Dear Mr Sastri

As I took an active part in the Congress affairs last year I have been asked to interest myself still more actively

course for me was to withdraw my application for admission and save those opposed to me from a delicate situation. Therein I thought lay my loyalty to the Society and Gokhale . . . . . The withdrawal of my application made me truly a member of the Society.' P. 472, second edition.

to the extent of joining an organisation. The demand has come from those with whom I have had the privilege of working although I was not connected with their organization. They have asked me to join the All-India Home Rule League.<sup>5</sup> I have told them that at my time of life and with views firmly formed on several matters I could only join an organization to affect its policy and not be affected by it. This does not mean that I would not keep or that I do not have an open mind to receive new light. I simply wish to emphasise the fact that any new light will have to be specially dazzling in order to entrance me. I placed before the friends the following points on which I hold decided views:—

1. Highest honesty must be introduced in the political life of the country if we are to make our mark as a nation. This presupposes at the present moment a very firm and definite acceptance of the creed of Truth at any cost.
2. Swadeshi must be our immediate goal. The future aspirants after membership of the council should be asked to pledge themselves to an out and out protection of the country's industries—specially cloth manufacture.
3. Definite acceptance of Hindustani—a resultant of Hindi and Urdu as a National Language of intercourse in the immediate future. The would-be members will be therefore pledged so to work in the Imperial Councils as to introduce Hindustani and in the Local Councils the respective vernaculars at least as an optional medium for the time being till we are able to dispense with English for the conduct of National Affairs. They will also be pledged to introduce Hindustani as a compul-

5 Organised by Mrs Besant.

sory second language in our schools with Devanagari or Urdu as an optional script. English will be recognized as a language of imperial intercourse, diplomacy and international commerce.

4. Acceptance of the principles of redistribution of provinces so far as possible on a linguistic basis at the earliest opportunity.
5. Hindu-Mohamedan Unity in its essence and from a political and religious standpoint as an unalterable article of faith. This contemplates mutual help, mutual toleration and recognition of the sufferings of one section to be the sufferings of all. This will exclude, from the official programme of the League, the Unity propaganda by means of interdining and intermarriage and will include vigorous co-operation on the Khilafat question. In my discussions amongst the friends I have also told them that I will not think of asking for official recognition of my creed of civil disobedience and that I do not belong to any party and would like to make the League a non-party organization helping all honest men if they are otherwise capable of doing justice to the service they may choose irrespective of party. The League, according to my opinion, cannot become an anti-Congress organization but it should work as it is now doing to further the interests of the Congress.

Do you advise me, knowing me as you do with my qualifications and limitations, to join the League?

Yours sincerely

M. K. GANDHI

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## THE MONTAGU-CHELMSFORD SCHEME (1918)

On the publication of the "Report on Constitutional Reforms" by the Rt. Hon. E. S. Montagu and H. E. Lord Chelmsford, Gandhiji wrote the following letter dated July 18, 1918, to Mr Sastri who had invited him to give an expression of his views on the subject for publication in the *Servant of India*.

After all, our standard of measurement must be the Congress-League Scheme. Crude though it is, I think that we should, with all the vehemence and skill that we can command, press for the incorporation into it of the essentials of our own.

I would, therefore, for instance ask for the rejection of the doctrine of compartments. I very much fear that the dual system in the Provinces will be fatal to the success of the experiment and as it may be only the success of the experiment that can take us to the next and, I hope, the final stage, we cannot be too insistent that the idea of reservation should be dropped. One cannot help noticing an unfortunate suspicion of our intentions regarding the purely British as distinguished from the purely Indian interests. Hence, there is to be seen in the scheme elaborate reservations on behalf of these interests. I think that, more than anything else, it is necessary to have an honest, frank and straightforward understanding about these interests, and for me personally this is of much greater importance than any legislative feat that British talent may be capable of performing. I would certainly, in as courteous terms as possible but equally emphatic, say that these interests will be held subservient to those of India as a whole and that therefore they are certainly in jeopardy in so far as they may be inconsistent with the general advance of India. Thus, if I had my way, I would cut down the Military expenditure. I would protect local

industries by heavily taxing goods that compete against products of our industries, and I would reduce to a minimum the British element in our services, retaining only those that may be needed for our instruction and guidance. I do not think that they had or have any claim upon our attention, save by right of conquest. That claim must clearly go by the board as soon as we have awakened to a consciousness of our national existence and possess the strength to vindicate our right to the restoration of what we have lost. To their credit let it be said that they do not themselves advance any claim by right of conquest. One can readily join in the tribute of praise bestowed upon the Indian Civil Service for their proficiency, devotion to duty, and great organising ability. So far as material reward is concerned, that Service has been more than handsomely paid and our gratitude otherwise can be best expressed by assimilating their virtues ourselves.

No scheme of reform can possibly benefit India that does not recognise that the present administration is top-heavy and ruinously expensive, and for me even law, order and good government would be too dearly purchased if the price to be paid for it is to be the grinding poverty of the masses. The watchword of our reform councils will have to be, not the increase of taxation for the growing needs of a growing country, but a decrease of financial burdens that are sapping the foundation itself of organic growth. If this fundamental fact is recognised, there need be no suspicion of our motives, and I think I am perfectly safe in asserting that in every other respect British interests will be as secure in Indian hands as they are in their own.

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20th MARCH 1919

Dear friend

I hope you have read my proposal about the observance of what may be called the Satyagraha Week from the 6th to the 13th April. I am hoping that during the week there will be no difficulty about collecting ten lacs of rupees. If there are volunteers of known respectability and unquestionable honesty we need have no receipts but simple collection from all and sundry. Monied men and women can go out and collect in the quarters best known to them. But it is not so much the manner as the matter which I wish to emphasise. I hope that there will be no difference of opinion as to the desirability of passing the week in the manner suggested by me or of having a memorial in connection with the massacre of the 13th. In presenting the case to the people I would advise that the memory of the dead and not of the atrocity be treated as the impelling motive.

I trust that those who do not approve of the method of Satyagraha will not on that account refrain from participating in the collection. This should be a truly national memorial.

But there is fasting and prayer too on which I myself lay even greater stress than on the memorial for if there is universal fasting and prayer I know that money and whatever we want will rain down from heaven without further effort. I wish to give you my experience in this direction as a specialist *par excellence*. I do not know any contemporary of mine who has reduced fasting and prayer to an exact science and who has reaped a harvest so abundant as I have. I wish that I could infect the nation with my experience and make it resort to fasting



and prayer with intelligence, honesty and intensity. We would thus, incredible as it may appear, do millions of things pertaining to the nation without elaborate organization and checks upon checks, but I know that fasting and prayer, to be as effective as I have found them to be in my own experience, have to be not mechanical things but definite spiritual acts. Fasting then is crucifixion of the flesh with a corresponding freedom of the spirit and prayer is a definite conscious longing of the soul to be utterly pure,—the purity thus attained being dedicated to the realization of a particular object which is in itself pure. I hope therefore that if you believe in the ancient institution of fasting and prayer you will dedicate the 6th and the 13th to that purpose and induce your neighbours to do likewise.

Then there remain the three meetings which I doubt not you will organize and make them a thorough success.

Yours sincerely

M. K. GANDHI

[Mr Sastri, as editor of "The Servant of India", wrote an article "The Country's Protest" on April 10, 1919. In it he said: 'Mammoth meetings were held in some of the largest cities on Sunday last (March 6, 1919) to register the country's protest against the Rowlatt Act and to pray His Majesty to disallow it in deference to the unanimous wishes of his subjects. The meetings were conducted everywhere with perfect order and decorum, thanks to the spirit inculcated by Mr Gandhi and Swami Shraddhanandaji..... The proceedings of last Sunday were not connected with the passive resistance movement and were participated in by those who are opposed to the movement as well as by those who are pledged to it. This is as it should be, and it incidentally affords a sufficient answer to those who speak contemptuously of the

constitutional agitation by the usual methods as if all its resources have been exhausted and it is destined to prove a failure. The happenings last Sunday will on the contrary force the conviction on the mind of a dispassionate observer that a steady and intensified agitation of the kind in which all can join will in all human probability be crowned with success.' ]

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### SOUTH AFRICA 1927-1928

[It was Mahatma Gandhi who suggested that Mr Sastri should be appointed the first Agent of the India Government in South Africa. When Sastriar was not inclined to undertake the responsibility and leave his work in India, Gandhiji urged upon him that he alone could successfully inaugurate the working of the Cape Town Agreement, in bringing about which he played a "not inconsiderable part". Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Mr Sastri's mission in South Africa was that he enjoyed the unstinted confidence on the one hand of the Government of India, and on the other of Mahatma Gandhi. Once Sastriar said "What a lucky man I was to be the medium of the most complete co-operation and exchange of mutual confidence between these two agencies, the Government of India and Mahatma Gandhi<sup>6</sup> ! " South Africa, curiously enough, was the medium of the most complete co-operation between Gandhiji and Sastriar, whom Indian politics have drawn apart, in spite of mutual love and understanding. Soon after his return in 1932 from South Africa, where Mr Sastri attended the second Round Table Conference at Cape Town, he said:—

"Twice before it has fallen to my lot to return from South Africa after fulfilling certain missions. On both

<sup>6</sup> The Mahatma was then a prisoner at Yeravada.

these occasions, it was felt by all my colleagues that the first thing to do on return to the shores of India was to go to Mahatma Gandhi and make a report to him of our doings. To no one could a prior report be made. If he approved of our work, that was enough—this was the feeling not merely of myself, who may be considered to have a weakness for Mahatma Gandhi, but of all with whom I was associated. And if I may for the first time publish a secret, it was also the feeling of the members of the Government of India. How sad I must feel now, you can imagine, when it is not possible for me to make a similar report to the one man in all India who has a right to form a judgement of South African affairs and lead public sentiment in the country! ”]

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6th April 1927

My dear Friend

This is from a sick bed. I had hoped to see you in Bangalore and press my suit. But it cannot be for some time yet. I have no reply to my wire which I hope you did get. You will break the heart of Indians in South Africa if you do not go. Mrs Sastri should certainly go with you.<sup>7</sup> I do not know that it is an advantage to have both host and hostess as brilliant talkers in English. You will be her interpreter or you can take for her one of the gifted Tamil graduate girls of whom you have so many. She will be her companion, teacher and interpreter. What did Queen Victoria do when she was hostess to the Shah of Persia who knew no English? And you can make it clear to Lord Irwin that you would want to be here when

7 In the event Mrs Sastri did not accompany Mr Sastri.

the Royal Commission comes. Lastly, there will be no fear of pin-pricks whilst Lord Irwin is Viceroy. He knows you so well. I urge you to re-consider your decision and go even if it is for a year. You alone can inaugurate the working of the compact, you alone can set the tone.

May God guide you.

Yours sincerely

M. K. GANDHI

[Forwarding a copy of the letter to a friend Mr Sastri wrote under it:—A letter to settle one's fate.]

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SABARMATI

22nd September 1927

My dear Brother

I have now two letters from you to acknowledge. I am sorry, you are still having trouble from the Transvaal friends. I hope, however, that you will not allow their defection to disturb your peace. I am watching things here and I would ask you not to worry over the notices that Aiyar and Co., may be able, now and then to secure in the press here of their activities. I suppose, I may safely say that no real stir will be made in India on the S. African question unless I stir. That much credit, somehow or other, I still retain, and it is likely to survive your term of office. And so long as the Union Government continue to co-operate with you and do not reject your advances, I do not see what useful purpose can be served by my making a stir here.

The result of the Pragji and Medh<sup>8</sup> case is unfortunate. I think that they are right in rejecting the offer of a temporary certificate. I do not attach any importance to C.I.D. reports about Medh. If he did anything criminal they should prosecute him, but not use against him C.I.D. reports. He may not be a perfect human being, but I do not think that he is in any way worse than the average Indian there or, for the matter of that, here. The way I look upon the case is this. The understanding of 1914<sup>9</sup> was that there should be no colour bar, at least, in theory. Therefore the Immigration Law, to read, does not show any colour-bar. In practice six men were to be admitted annually on the ground of educational qualifications, and, so far as I recollect, the question of domicile was not to affect them. For, they carried their qualifications in their own persons. As I am writing from memory I am writing under correction. You will, however, examine the position for what it is worth. I do hope that a way will be found of accommodating them.

I am glad you like Phoenix and I should feel happy if it could really become, on occasions, a resting place for you. Andrews described what might have been a serious accident as Kallenbach<sup>10</sup> was driving you from Pretoria to Johannesburg at break-neck speed, and one of the tyres of his fashionable motor burst. I wish you could persuade Kallenbach to come to India, if only to see me and return

8 Two prominent Indians of Johannesburg who, on returning after a period of residence in India, had trouble in getting their domicile certificates renewed.

9 The famous Smuts-Gandhi agreement.

10 A great friend and admirer of the Mahatma, then an architect practising in Johannesburg.

to his business. Miss Schlesin<sup>11</sup> has given me a fascinating description of her interview with you. When I was in Madras I tried to seek out Mrs Sastri, but I learnt that she was at Lucknow.

With love, Yours sincerely

M. K. GANDHI

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COIMBATORE

20th October 1927

My dear Brother

There is much fiery stuff coming from S. A. nowadays. Here is one cutting. I am watching what is happening but consider it wise not to say anything. But I shall not hesitate to intervene when necessary. What I find disturbing is a para in Manilal's letter which I translate below.

'I am not quite satisfied with his speeches.<sup>12</sup> He crosses the limits in praising the Empire and the benefits conferred by it on India. He thinks it necessary thus to please the Europeans. He seems

11 A European lady, who had been helping Gandhi as stenographer and clerk.

12 To his brother, Sastriar wrote from Pretoria on 6th October 1927:—

"I fully expected criticism of my sentiments about the Empire. People must make allowance for the difference in latitude and longitude. The public speaker whose conscience is not dead must be content very often to be guilty of *suppressio veri*. If he doesn't suggest a falsehood he does as much as is possible. However, it is a repetition of what occurred in my Dominion tour and when I returned after it. Some of the incidents I don't wish to recall."

to believe that thus only shall we secure something here. The effect of these speeches cannot be good in India. He has therefore asked me not to print them in "Indian Opinion".'

I thought I must pass on to you this from Manilal. For he is a good boy and brave boy. Knowing my later views about the Empire, I am not surprised at his mentality. He has not the faculty of discrimination to see that we are like blood brothers even though we do not hold the same views about the Empire. I have not said to him much about this letter of his beyond warning him against coming to hasty judgements and telling him that you do honestly believe the Empire activity to be on the whole beneficial. But you will of course not hesitate to summon him before you and speak to him if necessary, as you would to your own son. I do hope that you are not going to worry over what appears now and then in some papers here or what people may be talking there. Pray do not hesitate to tell me when you want me to act. Of course you know that I do not follow the papers closely, especially when I am moving from day to day.

May God keep you in good health.

With love, Yours

M. K. GANDHI

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SABARMATI

26th February 1928

My dear Brother

I have been duly receiving the duplicates of your demi-official notes for Sir Muhammad Habibullah. Manilal and others too keep me informed of your movements. Already

urgent letters are being received to implore you not to leave South Africa at the end of your year. They say you are already counting your months. And they are trembling in their shoes, and more than they, am I trembling, and perhaps my trembling is weightier because of the absence of shoes. For, I really feel that except for grave reasons of health it would be a national tragedy for you to leave South Africa at the present moment. And I am sorry to have to say—but it is true—that no one else can successfully replace you at the present moment. The familiarity that your stay in South Africa might have produced has certainly not bred contempt; on the contrary, it has gained greater respect for you from those whose respect counts for the work. And just as you have gained influence amongst the Europeans, you have gained staunch adherents amongst our own countrymen. You may not desert them. Do please therefore let me have a re-assuring letter. Of course I don't know what the Government may want you to do.

With love, Yours sincerely

M. K. GANDHI

If you were here, you would not appreciate our politics just now.

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1930

SABARMATI

12th January 1930

Dear Brother

This is to ask you if you can depute some one to go to South Africa and take charge of *Indian Opinion*.



Manilal is here with his wife. They would both like to be in India now. Manilal is by no means a brilliant or even passable editor. Devadhar was at one time thinking of sending some one. If you think that the proposal is at all feasible, please let me know.

I do hope you are not over-angry with me for my doings in Lahore.<sup>13</sup> I have but followed the Inner Voices. I saw no other honourable way out. Russell's speech has justified the decision, *i.e.* in my opinion of course. But I know that we can love one another in spite of sharp differences of opinion.

And how are you now in body?

Yours

M. K. GANDHI

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BASAVANGUDI, BANGALORE CITY

17th January 1930

Dear Brother

Once before, while I was still in South Africa, it was suggested that Kodanda Rao might be asked to stay behind and edit *Indian Opinion*. The idea did not commend itself to me, though I thought K. Rao would make a good editor. I shall mention two objections that occurred to me.

13 At the Lahore Congress (December 1929) 'Independence' was declared to be the political goal, and non-co-operation by the Congress with the Round Table Conference in London was decided on.

1. The Indian community and K. Rao might easily differ on important matters, and without me there the dispute might result in the paper ceasing to represent their views or being regarded in that light.
2. The Servants of India Society's interest in the paper and control of its policy were indeterminate, and a member would be at sea if he had to look to Sabarmati and to Poona as well as to Durban for direction.

That you and I agreed on S. A. matters was a blessing which might not be vouchsafed to another Servant of India. Things are not nearly so propitious now as they were at that time and my objections are if anything reinforced. However, I have referred your inquiry to Poona and shall write finally when I hear back.

You ask me about your part in the Lahore Congress. It has grieved me beyond words. I propose writing to you on a topic underlying your policy. No doubt you would have anticipated my line of thought. But it indicates a fundamental divergence between us, and I shall be more easy in mind when I have laid it before you. At present I can't help feeling that you are incurring responsibility more terrible than you ever did, and that is saying a great deal.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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SABARMATI

2nd February 1930

Dear Brother

I have your two letters. Of course if you could send some one to take charge of I. O. he will shape its policy

not according to my instructions but most decidedly yours. I should not interfere at all.

I wish you had written the letter you intended to. You know how I prize your opinion. It would give me immense relief to be able to adopt your mode of thought. But it has been my misfortune often to differ from most valued friends. My consolation lies in the fact that the mutual affection has never suffered.

Yours sincerely

M. K. GANDHI

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1932

YERAVADA PRISON

20th September 1932

My dearest friend and brother<sup>14</sup>

This is early morning of Tuesday just a little after 3 o'clock. I have just finished a brief letter to Gurudev.

14 This letter was written a few hours before the commencement of the historic fast of September 1932. Gandhiji had said at the Round Table Conference that he would resist with his life the grant of separate electorates for the depressed classes. He meant it literally. On his return to India, he was interned. He could not therefore carry on the propaganda against the proposal which he had contemplated. Not willing to take Government by surprise, he wrote as early as the 11th of March from Yeravada prison to Sir Samuel Hoare: "So far as Hinduism is concerned, separate electorates would simply vivisection and disrupt it . . . . I therefore respectfully inform His Majesty's Government that in the event of their decision creating separate electorates for the depressed classes, I must fast unto death." On the 18th of August, the day after the publication of the

You have been ever present before me during these days of anguish. I have perhaps read your thoughts. You know my regard for you. Though we are as poles asunder, or seem to be, in mental outlook at so many points, our hearts are one. Wherever therefore I have been able to agree with you, it has been a matter of pure joy. Perhaps this step of mine has been for you the last

communal decision, Gandhiji caused a letter to be cabled to Ramsay Macdonald. He said, "I have to resist your decision with my life. The only way I can do so is by declaring a perpetual fast unto death from food of any kind, save water with or without salt and soda." The Prime Minister cabled back a long argumentative reply defending the Government's action. The Mahatma, true to his word, commenced his fast on the announced date, 20th September. Followers and critics alike were thrown into dismay that the Mahatma should have entered upon an ordeal of stupendous and tragic implications. Events moved fast. Persons and parties acted with celerity. The Government assisted. Ultimately a system of primary elections for the 'Harijans' (a name then given by Gandhiji to the depressed classes) to be followed by joint elections for both sections of the Hindus was evolved, and the famous Poona Pact came into being.

#### MR. SASTRI'S TRIBUTE TO THE MAHATMA

Mr Sastri was presented with a civic address by the Coimbatore Municipality on the 22nd September, 1932, that is, on the third day of the Mahatma's fast. In his reply, he made the following touching reference to Mahatma Gandhi:—"In these days of anxiety no proceedings, whether public or private, may be begun, without the hearts of all who are engaged therein turning towards what is happening within the walls of the Central Prison at Yerawada. The public mind and the hearts of private friends of the Mahatma are alike agitated as they were agitated on few occasions, to contemplate the great stake upon which he has placed his life. His life, it would be needless to say, is lived as few lives in history or fable

straw. Even so I want to have your laceration. For I do not want you to cease to strive with me—I remained in banishment from my eldest brother for, I think, fourteen years. Year after year he sent me curses by registered post. I rejoiced in his curses. His curses were so many sparks of love—I won him. Six months before his death he saw that I was in the right. One of the reasons for his wrath was this very question of untouchability. In our case, I do not know who is in error.<sup>15</sup> But I do know that you are as blood brother to me. At this (maybe) last crisis, you must not cease to strive with me. Send me your curses or your blessings. You may open my eyes, where others have failed, if you think I am in error. You know me too well not to know that I have the God-given capacity of owning my mistakes, if the conviction comes to me. Do write or wire to me.

have been lived. It is of supreme consequence to our kind; and he has now risked it in a cause dear to all of us. We follow with trepidation, and after the morning news in the papers, with some hope, what is going on amongst the leaders of India assembled near Poona. It is a great relief and satisfaction to know that the messages received are full of hope."

*Mr Sastri's telegram.* Mr Sastri sent the following telegram to the Mahatma on the 25th of September: "Million homes rejoice and bless your superb service performed in your superb style. I confess I trembled in doubt, but the result vindicates and establishes you indisputably the foremost 'Untouchable' and 'Unapproachable'."

15 Mr Sastri's opinion of the communal decision, as given in the *Servant of India*, August 25, 1932, is as follows:—

"An adverse criticism of the communal award is easy and would from several aspects be deserved, but it ill becomes those who by their failure cast the odious duty on Government to take up a censorious attitude. Seeing that the door is not

I wrote to you a month ago inquiring about your health. I never got a reply. I wonder if you ever got my post card.

Deep love

M. K. GANDHI

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YERAVADA CENTRAL PRISON

30th October 1932

Dear Brother and Friend

Your wire and your letter are my treasure and my food. I shall not misunderstand you. Under better auspices, I anticipate no difficulty in rendering a full and intelligible account of my doings in London. But that is a matter of small account. I want our love to stand the severest ordeal. I am flourishing. With deep love.

Yours

M. K. GANDHI

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closed yet on an agreement of the communities, and that in any event the award is subject to alteration at the end of a period, those who value peace must accept the award with as much grace as possible. The big constitutional issues to follow will tax all our wisdom. Let us await that supreme test."

## YERAVADA CENTRAL PRISON

8th November 1932

Dear Friend and Brother<sup>16</sup>

You will have seen that Guruvayur<sup>17</sup> is being made the centre of attack by the self-styled Sanatanists. There is not much time to lose. I do not know how far your health will let you organise the battle on behalf of the reformers. To the extent it is possible, I would like you to put your great Sanskrit learning at the disposal of the cause. I am sure you have been thinking of the thing yourself. But I could not restrain myself from sending you a line when I am writing to many friends about the impending storm.

It gives me great joy that I am able to take some work out of the Servants here.

I do hope you are better.

With love, Yours

M. K. GANDHI

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16 Sending a copy of this letter to a friend, Mr Sastri wrote: "In reply I have written two letters, clearly stating my dissent from his views and my disapproval of his threatened fast. Of course I favour the temple-entry of the untouchables". Writing to another friend, Mr Sastri said, "What a predicament I am in! To wish his cause success but utterly discountenance his method and his hurry."

17 Mr Kelappan had entered on a 'fast unto death' to get the Guruvayur temple opened to the Harijans, and suspended it at the earnest request of the Mahatma. So, on November 10, 1932, Gandhiji issued a statement in which he said:—"I would be in honour bound to fast with him if on or before the first of January next that temple is not opened to the Untouchables, and if it becomes necessary for Sjt. Kelappan to resume his fast."

24th November 1932

Dear Brother

I had your precious letters.<sup>18</sup> Your criticism soothes. Your silence makes me nervous. Time only deepens my love for you. Our differences appear to me to be superficial. Deep down I feel and touch the meeting ground, and that is precious.

I do wish I never spoke of God or the Inner Voice or Conscience. But, like Rāmnām, however much it may be abused, it has got to be repeated when it is relevant, and almost becomes imperative. Truth will receive a deep cut if, for fear of being misunderstood or even being called a fraud, I did not say boldly what I felt to be true.

I carefully read the typed notes you sent me. The reasoning failed to make any appeal to me. The implications of the Agamas are stretched too far by the writer.

I hope you are keeping well.

With love, Yours

M. K. GANDHI

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18 From other letters of the period we learn that among other points Mr Sastri had raised these two:—

1. "I took occasion to pick a bone with him. In several places in his writings, he seems to dethrone non-violence from its place of honour, and crown the pinch-beck god of physical courage instead. He actually prefers courageous violence to cowardly non-violence. This inconsistency in the apostle of *ahimsa* amounts to inconstancy. Like Arjuna in the *Gita*,



1933

THE SCHOOLMASTER ABROAD<sup>19</sup>

I wrote to the Rt. Hon. Shrinivasa Sastri for a message to the 'Harijan'. And I received a characteristic reply marked 'private'. The letter seemed to me to be too good to be suppressed. I, therefore, wired for permission to publish it. The reply wire was as characteristic as the letter.

"Firstly inappropriate to 'Harijan', secondly offensive to partisans, ill requital for your steadfast affection. However, if perchance useful, please publish."

And here is the letter.

*Private*

MYLAPORE

13th February 1933.

Dear Brother

Thanks for your affectionate letter, in which you ask for a message to your new baby.

I am going to change towards you. It is necessary in your interest, no matter what effort it costs me.

You live in a difficult world. Waking or dreaming, you are racked by thoughts of sin and penance, confessions and truth-quests, satyagraha and moral self-flagellation. Those

having sent home my dart of criticism, I folded my hands and prayed: "Enlighten me, for my soul is cast in doubt and you know all."

2. "I have written objecting to his too frequent references to the Inner Voice."

19 Published in the "Harijan" by Gandhiji.

that talk to you or correspond with you continually pose doubts and serious problems, only deepening the grimness and suffocation around you. Few bring lightness of talk, familiar expletives, innocent jokes, revealing banter. You badly need a privileged jester in your establishment. Have you read a story called *Ardath* by Ouida? The hero there has a critic whose business is to expose his errors and bring to light the flaws in his character. Being a professional fault-finder, he overdoes his part in the end and defeats his first object. I shall vary my function from time to time and disappear from the scene every now and then. But I will endeavour to awaken parts of your mind long gone to sleep and to supply elements of nourishment which it has long been without. Of course, you can stop the medicine if it disagrees and you cannot stand it! That would be a sign to me that the disease had gone too far.

You are an extraordinarily correct writer of English. The ordinary reader will not detect any slips on your part. They are not only rare but of a subtle nature. The eye of a schoolmaster, made acute by dwelling on trivialities of grammar, can alone see them. Here are some, all from the first number of the 'Harijan' and from the parts bearing your name.

Page 3. " If it is a bye-product of the caste system, it is only in the same sense *that* an ugly growth is of a body ". (' That ' is fast undergoing a change in English, but this use is far in excess of present usage. Better say ' in which ' an ugly growth is a bye-product of a body '.)

Also read the whole passage again. Don't you say in effect ' If the caste system is a bye-product of the caste system ' ?

Page 3. "The outcaste-ness, in the sense we understand it, has therefore to be destroyed altogether." (A slip similar to the above. Between 'sense' and 'we', insert 'in which'.)

Page 4. "Caste Hindus have to open their temples to Harijans, precisely on the same terms as the other Hindus."

(Say 'the same terms as 'to' the other Hindus'. Else, it would mean that the other Hindus opened their temples on certain terms to Harijans.)

Page 7. "Beyond this I may not go, for the reason I have already stated and which the reader should respect." (Insert 'which' after 'reason'. The conjunction 'and' must not be made to connect a suppressed 'which' and an expressed 'which'.)

Page 8. "Untouchability has a great deal to answer for the insanitation of our streets and our latrines." (Idiomatically, 'for' is part of the verb 'answer', and cannot govern 'the insanitation'. We must insert 'in' after 'for', though the sentence become inelegant. I would recast it: 'Untouchability is answerable for a great deal of the insanitation &c.').

Page 8. "Therefore a person who is to attend to scavenging, whether it is a paid bhangi or an unpaid mother, they are unclean until they have washed themselves clean of their unclean work."

(The looseness is, perhaps, the result of rapid dictation unchecked by subsequent reading. 'A person' is left hanging in the air. The plurals 'they' 'themselves' and 'their' are justified by the common gender required.

Still, the discord of number is apparent to the point of harshness and may be avoided. Read 'A person..... is unclean until washed clean of the unclean work.')

Let me add a criticism of substance. On page 7 you answer a question under the heading "Seeking or Giving?" The paragraph has gained brevity at the expense of clearness. The difference between giving co-operation and seeking it requires more elucidation. Likewise the analogy of love leading to feeding in one case and starving in another. But you are obscure and even baffling when you say that your policy of non-co-operation with Government allows of your seeking its co-operation whenever your purpose is, in your opinion, "very sacred and altogether good". Most sensible people follow this rule in ordinary life, not seeking co-operation when they don't care and seeking it when they care. They don't proclaim it as a policy or give it a grand name.

Ever yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

I wanted to share this letter with the public, because such a letter would help any publicist and his cause and that in an unexpected manner, more so when written without any thought of publication.

I want also to use the publication of the letter for easing the tension between sanatanists and reformers. Let them learn that closest friendships can subsist between persons of contrary temperaments. As the public know, Sastri and I have opposite views on many important questions. Our mutual regard and affection have never suffered on that account. There is no reason whatsoever why the

same rule cannot be extended to parties and groups representing opposite schools of opinion. The sanatanists are out to defend religion as they believe it. I take their claim at its face value and deal with it as such. Why need they impute to me political motives when I solemnly assert that for me, too, the question of untouchability is a matter purely of religion? Would that the affection subsisting between Sastri and me prove so deep and extensive as to reach and affect the whole society!

But enough of this. I almost hear Sastri's spirit whispering to me: 'You are misusing the medicine I prescribed to wean you from your disease of grimness and the like'. Therefore, let me hasten to tell him and the public that I have in my little camp of four a specially privileged jester in Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel. He succeeds in bending me almost double every day with laughter over his unexpected sallies. Gloom hides her fiendish face in his presence. No disappointment, however great, can make him gloomy for long. And he will not let me be serious for two consecutive minutes. He will not spare even my 'saintliness'! It may deceive simple people but never the Sardar or the sanatanists. Both tear down the mask and compel me to see myself as they delight to see me. To be just to the sanatanists, let me admit that Vallabhbhai does not see me quite as sanatanists do. But that is beside the point. The thing that Sastri wants in our little family is there cent per cent. Next time he enters the Assembly or some such place, he must vote special thanks to the Government for putting Vallabhbhai with me or me with him.

But this consoling information does not in any way release Sastri from his self-imposed obligation. For the

Sardar will not do what Sastri can be trusted to do mostly. Unlike him, the Sardar has the wretched habit in the end of saying 'ditto' to all I say. And that is bad for anybody.

Let the student note in passing Sastri's love for the language he has mastered as few men have done. He is a purist in everything. We badly need purists in our country. I want only purists as fellow-workers in this glorious campaign of abolition of untouchability.

As to the purity of the language of 'Harijan', whatever faults are found notwithstanding Sastri's warning will be shared with me by Sastri, the Editor, and by Mahadev Desai, who shares with the schoolmaster the weakness for writing correctly in the language which for the moment he is using.

I must leave the reader to find out for himself or herself the many other beauties of Sastri's letter. If he will do so, he must read the letter three or four times and look up all the references in the first issue of 'Harijan'.

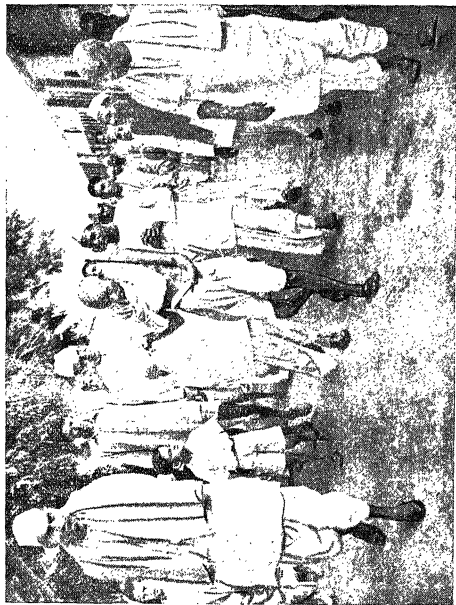
M. K. GANDHI

2nd May 1933

My dear Brother

Dare I ask for your blessings for the coming Yajna ?<sup>20</sup> It is now nearing 2 a.m. I have left my bed among other

20 The twenty-one days' fast that Gandhiji kept from the 8th to 29th May 1933. Of the fast, Gandhiji said, 'It is particularly against myself. It is a heart prayer for the purification of self and my associates..... I want more workers of unassailable purity.'



GANDHIJI, MAHADEVA DESAI AND OTHERS

Dear Mr. Sastriar,

I have heard so much of you  
that I almost feel we know each other  
since the farming <sup>of the</sup> ~~of the~~  
Mr. Gokhale is taking <sup>for himself</sup> ~~for himself~~ each  
as he can get <sup>into</sup> ~~into~~ a most  
thorough <sup>thorough</sup> ~~thorough~~ work. He has therefore  
commissioned me to write to you.

The reception throughout the land  
have been very full & my European  
- many prominent leaders have  
taken part in them & you will  
see from the paper we send to the  
Society. In my opinion Mr. Gokhale's  
mission is bound to be fruitful.  
Mr. Gokhale's speeches have been  
much appreciated everywhere.

Coming to his service to India,  
Mr. Gokhale's plans have not been al-  
tered. He will now sail by D.D.  
Chankay, leaving <sup>for</sup> ~~for~~ <sup>for</sup> ~~for~~  
on the 20th instant and reaching

Calcutta about the 4th day of the  
month. You please be on the  
look out. Mr. Gokhale would  
like Mr. Ranjith to join him  
at Calcutta & would like  
you to join him at Madras.  
Passage has not yet been settled  
we will reach you a little  
with the exact joining exact  
particulars.

I am  
Yours truly,  
M. G. K.

GANDHIJI'S LETTER TO SASTRIAR FROM TOLSTOY FARM



things to write this begging letter. If the fast does not meet with your approval, I know you are too true a brother to grant my request merely to please me.

With love, Yours

M. K. GANDHI

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*Private*

MYLAPORE

7th May 1933

Dearest Brother

After much thought and destruction of several drafts, I have decided that the best reply to your 'begging' and most touching letter of the 2nd instant is the enclosed extract. I trust it will sustain you ever so little in the ordeal which will have begun when it reaches Yeravada. It would have been useless and, as you said in your first statement, embarrassing for me to try to dissuade. What remains for your friends and associates is to wish that you may come out of the ordeal not merely unscathed, but armed afresh with the strength of *tapas* for the struggle that seems without end.

I will not pretend for a moment that I approve of your fast. To one like me, born in Hinduism and bred up in it for long years, the arguments pro and con are thoroughly familiar. From sacred texts one might confute most of the reasoning in your statements. But beyond texts and mere authority is reason and humanity, on which you habitually fall back. Even in that ultimate court I fear we shall not be found on the same side. Our *values* are different fundamentally. The difference is radical, no sophistry can abolish it.

In spite of what you have said in the last revelation of your heart, I believe that too much self-communion and internal debate have undermined your judgement. The state of ecstasy when values are reversed, when day becomes night and night day, when pleasure becomes pain and pain pleasure, is rare even in the experience of mystics. The attempt to make it habitual and to adopt the language appropriate to that state as the language of everyday speech is, if I may use the expression, to walk on moral stilts. On occasions you appear to me, in strange contrast to your realism, to impose that mode of movement on the common men and women around you. The atmosphere in such circumstances is apt to be thick with disappointment and grievous failure. And if the only correction possible were self-correction, the master must needs find himself doomed to the cell of penitence, which is next door to suicide. You have enough philosophy to understand that to claim divine sanction for a course of conduct is to withdraw it from the field of discussion and deprive it of direct validity to other minds. Whenever I come across the claim in your writing I cannot help quoting to myself the famous line of Kalidasa:

विचारमूढः प्रतिभासि मे त्वम् ।

You appear to me to be confounded by anxious thought.

I cannot tell you how much I deplore the publication of the story of Nila Nagini Devi. If it were merely a confession, I might understand it, though it would still repel me as the exposure of one's sores. But why should you rub it in? The moral proclaims itself. Here again it is a deep-going disparity of taste. I am still in the grip of the world's idea of decorum. You have gone beyond, and would repudiate our standards. With great effort I

remind myself that hagiology is full of such records, and I must somehow get reconciled.

I did not mean to write at length, but the stuff inside has forced itself on your attention. Don't mind it. Treat the letter as if it were nothing but the expression of my unchanged love and of my fervent wish that you should live long and serve the great causes you cherish. For, contrary to your teaching, I hold that you are more potent than your memory can be.\*

With affectionate thoughts, Yours always  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

### REVOLUTION AND RELIGION

is a review by John Middleton Murry of a book called *Moral Man and Immoral Society* by Reinhold Niebuhr. The review appears in the *Aryan Path* of this month. Below are transcribed the concluding paragraphs in which reference is made to Mr Gandhi.

“What, then are those who are convinced alike of the material and spiritual necessity \* \* \*

\* \* \* for the social struggle in the Western World? ” There is our tragedy. It is a most significant tribute to Gandhi that he should be the figure in whom the rigorous yet imaginative arguments of Niebuhr's book inevitably culminate. Of the book itself, I can only say that it seems to be of an altogether higher order than any other

\* Prior to the commencement of the fast Gandhiji said in a statement:—“God's ways are inscrutable. And who knows, He may not want my death during the fast to be more fruitful of beneficent results than my life? \* \* \* \* Who doubts that the spirits of Ramakrishna and Dayanand, Vivekananda and Ramatirtha are working to-day amongst our midst? It may be that they are more potent to-day than when they were in our midst in flesh.”

examination of the menacing problem of western civilisation with which I am acquainted. It is a prophetic book: and I do not believe I shall be found the victim of romantic illusionism when I say that I believe it will prove to be the forerunner of a new and enduring political movement in the English-speaking world.'

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COIMBATORE

27th August 1933

Dearest Brother

Government might well have given you the old facilities.<sup>21</sup> A curse has disabled them from generous or timely action.

21 This letter has reference to the 'Harijan facilities fast' of August 1933. On the first of August the Mahatma and his chosen band of individual resisters were arrested at Sabarmati. Gandhiji was released on 4th August, and immediately after served with an order restricting his movements. On disobeying the order, he was re-arrested. Release and re-arrest happened also to his followers. Soon after his arrest Gandhiji wrote to the Government seeking permission for facilities for Harijan work which he had enjoyed as prisoner in 1932. On the 14th instant, after Gandhi had sent four reminders and announced his intention to fast, the Government gave him certain facilities. He was, however, to give no interviews for publication in the press. Gandhiji considered the facilities "far short of the original orders of the Government of India and of my requirements". It was clear Government gave the facilities grudgingly. They had, moreover, passed an unfair criticism that when the Mahatma was free he devoted more time to political work than to Harijan work. Gandhiji went on his fast on the 16th of August. He was released on the 23rd instant.

Sastriar's view of the order made after the Poona pact will be clear from the view expressed by *The Servant of India* (August 24, 1933). 'He (Gandhiji) went further and said, "As I have made it clear in my previous correspondence and as the

But they haven't conferred a right on you or made you a promise. What they conceded to you at one time and in one set of conditions they are not bound to concede to you at another time and in another set of conditions. The order made after the Poona Pact, from which you quote,<sup>22</sup> does not amount to an irrevocable or unconditional promise. You indulge in special pleading of a bad type when you charge them with a breach of promise. The addition of the words 'made to a prisoner in their custody' loses the point it might have had otherwise.

Government of India have admitted, permission to render that service (to the Harijans) is implied in the Yerawada Pact, to which the British Government is a consenting party in so far as its consent was necessary." The full implication of the Mahatma's assertion will perhaps be apparent when the correspondence to which he referred is published and we trust that it will immediately be released. But there is nothing in the Poona Pact or in the British Government's acceptance thereof, as far as we can make out, which committed Government to admitting any special right of the Mahatma to carry on Harijan service from the jail. It is true that the Government permitted him to carry on Harijan propaganda "without let or hindrance", as the Mahatma acknowledged. In doing so, they did well and all social reformers and humanitarians are grateful to them for it. But that concession did not create a vested right, which they may not take away now.' To this I must add Sjt. Mahadev Desai's note:—"This letter has reference to what is called the "Harijan Facilities Fast" which resulted in Gandhiji's release on the seventh day and transfer to Parnakuti where he broke the fast. Sastriar had evidently no access to the long correspondence that had taken place between Government and Gandhiji. All he was insisting on was the privileges he had enjoyed as prisoner during the year 1932, and the conditions of which he had scrupulously observed.' M.D.

<sup>22</sup> In a statement.

It might be said by an observer who wasn't prejudiced against Government that, while Harijan uplift was dear to you, putting blame on Government was dearer. It has been said in my hearing by well-disposed persons that you would love nothing so much as to die in gaol and leave Government burdened with the responsibility.

Behind and beyond your present tussle with Government lies the future of the country. How can Congress best secure that future? Your answer is clear. But another answer is taking shape in people's minds. It is that civil disobedience, both mass and individual, must be given up. A new policy, aiming at constructive national good in legislation, finance and administration all round, has long been overdue and must be tried, over and above what is now called the constructive programme of Congress. I believe this feeling is common outside Congress, and is gaining ground inside Congress. How can this orientation be brought about?

It is so different from your present policy, in look so opposed to it, that one doubts whether you can undertake it. Perhaps your whole preparation and equipment lie in a different direction. It is no disparagement to any one that he is not fitted to lead the nation in all contingencies and in all directions. Unfortunately no man, however big, can be always trusted to know his limitations and make room when the cause to which he is devoted requires it. His very greatness stands in the way of change. And as I have told you more than once, you have out-topped all other leaders so long and so decisively that there is no man in sight to take your place at once. What a blessing it would be if you could be transformed and re-made, as it were, for the fresh era! But you are too

good, too true to yourself to pretend you are the same teacher when the ereed is no longer yours and the ritual is something you have never conducted.

In this sore strait, the country looks to you to play a greater part than you have ever played. (Pardon me: what I mean is the greater part of the country as I figure out the parties). Save your individual conscience, pursue civil disobedience, seek the goal and embarrass Government as you like;—but leave Congress free to evolve a new programme. It simply cannot do so, while it has to give authority and countenance to individual disobedience. You remember I begged you to adopt this course when I was last with you at Parnakuti. You told me you put it to the working committee, but they would have none of it. Naturally and in a way properly too. The committee couldn't face the odium of abandoning you. I don't wonder the thought was abhorrent to them. The moment is come—in my opinion it came long ago—for you to say, 'I set Congress free to try other methods. I have plenty of God's work to do, for the nation's welfare, with Harijans'.

There, then, I've told you the truth as it seems to me. May one hope that you will see the problem from a new angle? I know one thing. There is no self-effacement to which you are not equal. The only thing is, it must seem to you to be called for.

All that a friend and brother can do is to give an indication.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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30th August 1933

Dear Brother

I treasure your letter.

I do not mind anything you have said. On the contrary I appreciate all you have said. Having said this, I must say that I utterly dissent from your interpretation of Government orders. If you saw all the correspondence, perhaps you will revise your judgement. I am not given to special pleading consciously. You may not have noticed that the Government have themselves dropped the idea of 'another set of conditions'. On the contrary, they said that they made a mistake in making what you call 'concession in the first instance', and the mistake made was not one on merits but had reference to their own convenience.

However, I shall not strive with you in connection with your pronouncement upon my statement, but if you will care to study the whole question I would gladly send you the whole of the correspondence. I hope that you yourself do not consider me to be capable of desiring to blame the government for the sake of doing so or that that performance would be dearer to me than Harijan uplift. I consider myself capable of a just discrimination and therefore of knowing when the Government is in the right. But this is all beside the point. I have taken so much space with what is now immaterial, in order to tell you that I do not plead guilty to the charge you have made against me.

Now for the central point of your letter. I quite agree with you that I am wholly unfit for the constitution building at the present stage. In my opinion that time



is not yet. It will come only when the nation has developed a sanction for itself. I would therefore gladly retire from the Congress and devote myself to the development of civil disobedience outside the Congress and to Harijan work. The difficulty is how to do it? Can I do it by seceding from the Congress? That was the question that troubled me at the time of the informal conference and that is the question that confronts me again. I am seeking light. As soon as I have regained sufficient strength I shall again sound the mind of Congressmen and if I can possibly retire from the Congress I shall gladly do so. My impression, however, is that the Congress mentality has not changed. Whilst it is true that a large number of Congressmen have got tired very few would care to subscribe to the white paper or work for securing certain improvements in it. They want a radical change. But I am in no hurry to come to any final decision. I can give you this assurance that nothing will deter me from taking any steps that might be in the best interests of the nation. There is no question even of self-effacement. Performance of duty I have held always to be a thing of beauty and a joy for ever. The awful fact, however, has often been to know where duty lies.

You won't give me up, but continue to guide me and you will not hesitate to come if you felt like coming. I am not going to hesitate to ask you to come when I feel that I need your personal contact and a constant exchange of thoughts.

Love

M. K. GANDHI

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COIMBATORE

4th September 1933

Dear brother

I was touched by your reply. It was full and reasoned. Neither of us forms an opinion in a hurry or drops it in a hurry. But there is a satisfaction in knowing the other side. In all circumstances, we shall carefully understand and make allowances for each other.

So let us dismiss the past.

I plead for Congress being freed from your rule. If you wait for its consent to the course, a very long delay is inevitable. Grant the freedom immediately. Must you, like the British Raj, put off the consummation till it becomes inevitable?

Certainly Congress are not going to bother about improving on the white paper. With the Tories in power and our minorities clamouring for alms, that is an impossible dream. Few progressive politicians in India indulge in it any more.

You write in your letter of forging a national sanction. Let one assume for a moment that yours is the only way of doing it, still must it be in point of time continuous, absolutely without intermission or respite to the nation? May it not be, in certain conditions, another way can be tried with advantage? The belief is widespread that such conditions are now in being. I will name two of these. (1) The ascendancy of the Tories which looks likely to last long. (2) The danger to Indian Nationalism from the passing of the political power into the hands of

minorities backed by and dependent on the British people. If the ill effects of these conditions should be kept at a minimum, the national forces must combine effectively and must make themselves felt in all directions and all the time. 'Victory or Nothing' is a rousing cry on the battlefield. When the day is lost, it has no meaning. Where legislatures exist, even such manacled legislatures as ours, much may be done, were it only to prevent evil by vigilant opposition. It is first rate to be the Government. If you can't be that, the next best thing is to be a strong united opposition. Bacon said we must have our hands constantly in affairs, and he was a man of the world.

I know you have no faith in this method. But do not forget it takes all sorts to make a world. 'God fulfils Himself in many ways lest one good custom should corrupt the world.'

You seemed to think, when we last talked of this matter, that one wing of Congress might apply this method while another wing went on with individual Civil Disobedience. I am clear the two methods are utterly incompatible. Congress must choose one. Nor can the liberal and progressive schools be trusted to employ their methods on the necessary scale or with appreciable effect. I am a liberal, but not so partisan as not to see the nation's good except through liberal spectacles. It is my heart's wish that Congress and liberals and others similarly devoted to the cause of the future nation should merge together and form one large party. But the idea is too good for the moment. We must be content to have these parties, with their several labels but co-operating for common purposes, as clearly defined as possible.

If there is sense in this plan, pray give it a chance. Two conditions are necessary. Civil Disobedience must go. Dictatorship must go.

Yours lovingly

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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PARNAKUTI

9th September 1933

My dear Brother

I like your letter.

I want you to continue to strive with me and believe, as Gokhale used to believe of me, that whilst I often appeared to be uncompromising, I had a compromising and accommodating nature. I have always prized the certificate that he gave me and have endeavoured to live up to it. If the freedom that you desire for the Congress was in my giving, I assure you that I would give it today, but it is not such a simple performance. When at Patna I surrendered all powers to the Swaraj party, Motilalji handsomely admitted that, though I was always ready to give, the party was only then to take them. The fact is that I do not want power. I look upon it as a privileged service. The moment I feel that I can get out of it to the benefit of the Congress, I will not fail. However, you may depend upon me that I shall strain every nerve to adopt your advice. A great deal will depend upon Jawaharlal, whom I expect here on Saturday.

Love

M. K. GANDHI

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1934

WARDHA

17th November 1934

Dear Brother

Though our hearts are one we seem to be living in different worlds of thought and action. This knowledge has been oppressing me of late. Just now I have an offer from the Servants of India Branch in Nagpur of full co-operation in the village industries work. I do not know how far this will materialise. But the offer is full-hearted and I shall make the most of it if we agree when the time for execution comes. But I am not sure that such co-operation will have your full approval. I do not know how far the movement for return to the village chakki and the rice husking mill and the like appeals to you.

This is merely to share my thoughts with you and to tell you how I long for your co-operation at some point of my many activities. And yet I want nothing from you that does not command the full approval of your reason. You are too true to act otherwise than in accordance with your reason. Your truthfulness is far more precious for me than your mere co-operation in my activities.

With love, yours

M. K. GANDHI

23rd November 1934

Dear Brother

You are used to carry big burdens, and seem never happy unless you are jumping from one stupendous task to a more stupendous task. The village industries problem is in nature and extent far more difficult and baffling than the attainment of *Swaraj*. But in your all-comprehending mind problems, however diverse and vast, blend together into one mysterious, or, if you won't mind the word, mystic whole. Fly upward, mighty-winged denizen of far-off regions! I can but watch you with breathless wonder for one brief minute, and then you are lost to my blinking vision.

I have sent copies of your letter to a few intimate associates. If their replies indicate any more hopeful lines of co-operation than are now perceptible, I shall address you again. To my unaided mind, you appear to be opening the first campaign of an endless and quixotic war against modern civilisation. Long ago you proclaimed yourself its sleepless enemy, and now you would, if you could, turn it back on the course it has pursued for several millennia. I reel at the mere thought.

A deep-lying *affinity* calls us together occasionally, but life is heedless and draws us apart with no non-violent hands.

Yours lovingly ever

V. S. SRINIVASAN

1939

[The following letter is included in this section since it is practically addressed to Mahatma Gandhi.]

ANNAMALAINAGAR

22nd September 1939

My dear Mahadev

Today I am seventy.

In a small and unpretentious way I have tried to be truthful. Success, however, has been little, failure colossal. In criticizing the Mahatma, I have perhaps been a little too outspoken, encouraged by his well-known love of candour and readiness to forgive. An old saying runs:

सत्यं ब्रूयात्प्रियं ब्रूयान्न ब्रूयात्सत्यं मप्रियम् ।

प्रियं च नानृतं ब्रूयादेष धर्मः सनातनः ॥

One should tell the true; one should tell the agreeable.

One should not tell the true, if it is disagreeable, and one should not tell the agreeable, if it is untrue.

This is the eternal law.

Easy-seeming precept, but well-nigh unattainable in practice. To avoid transgression, I shall write to you instead of to him; being much my junior, you ought to be willing to stand a lot from me.

No doubt you have gone over the ground of controversy with conscientious thoroughness. I will not drag you over it again. Let me just supplement the remarks I made the other day<sup>23</sup> with affectionate vehemence, as you say. Vehemence is my weakness, in extenuation of which I shall only plead that my bark is worse than my bite.

23 Sjt. Desai had met Sastriar a few days before at Madras.

Western advocates of non-violence have tested the doctrine by imagining an invasion of Britain by Germany. They are willing that the people who have through centuries sworn that they never will be slaves should not strike a blow in self-defence! In fact, as I have more than once pointed out to my friends, their non-violence is embodied in the Biblical text 'Resist not evil', while Gandhi's teaching may be summed up as 'Resist evil, but passively and non-violently.' The distinction is real and visible in the formulation of consequences. In the not improbable event of India being a theatre of war, is Gandhi prepared to advise his countrymen to bare their breasts to the enemy's sword? A little while ago, I would have pledged my word he would do so, but I am not confident any more. Lansbury would go further and say, 'Why bare your breasts and tempt the enemy to violence? Our mission is to keep violence at the minimum; surrender therefore and let the enemy have his way.'

C. R. has made a great name as a teacher by parable and simile. I am miles behind him in the art, but shall venture to use a comparison or two, of which you will instantly see the point. Gandhi's disowning of violence *for himself* but commendation of it for the W. C. C. reminds me of an old uncle of mine, reputed for learning and piety. His wife would provide him with a stick and station him in the outer pial for guarding cereals that were drying in the street from greedy cattle. As soon as a cow or buffalo approached, the old man would shout an SOS to a boy in the neighbourhood, put the stick in his hand and urge him to drive away the depredator. You may rejoin that, while my uncle hoped in vain to transfer the sin, Gandhi will be glad to take it all on himself and relieve the principal delinquents. Let me



cite a closer parallel. The Bishop in *Les Miserables*, when the policeman brought him Jean Valjean with the silver candlestick that the latter had stolen, hailed the thief with the friendly exclamation 'Why have you left the other behind? I gave you the pair'. Here was a godly man telling a lie that so the moribund soul of a hardened sinner might have a chance to revive. Risking one's own soul to save another's is not rare in hagiology. But a transgression is a transgression, and the recording angel, if there be such an one, will not omit it from the reckoning. Witness our own Yudhishtira, who had to have a glimpse of hell for having told an untruth, though under dire necessity and, so the story goes, at the bidding of the Lord himself. From one who never tires of preaching that Truth = Non-Violence = God, the apologia and panegyric of the W. C. C.'s manifesto comes on the unsophisticated reader with a shock.

The matter seems to have a deeper stratum. It lies in a thicket of casuistry and I own I am lost. What was Gandhi's difference with the W. C. C. which caused him so much grief? Was it their apostasy in respect of non-violence? Or was it their refusal to offer co-operation to Great Britain without bargaining terms? The text of his statement, in the opening sentence, would seem to favour the second interpretation. If so, are we to understand that, before he came to the W. C. C. meeting, he had made up his mind to advise co-operation in the war? To plead that his co-operation with violence was to be non-violent is a poor defence. Non-violent violence beats me! Pundit Nehru and the W. C. C. would not be content with this anaemic simulacrum of support if Britain complied with their demand and promised India her freedom.

In Nehru's gloss on the W. C. C.'s manifesto there is a passage denying that it is in the nature of a bargain. Will Gandhi endorse the denial? I know not. Here I come to another little story. You see I am a faithful pupil of C. R., however backward. I imagine a group of little children of different ages at play in a Hindu joint family. Enter the grandfather with something concealed in his hand. 'Here is something nice' he cries out, 'who wants it?' 'Me, me, me' they all yell together with outstretched hands. The old fox now tries a trick on them. Says he: 'That won't do. Nobody that asks shall get it'. Most of the little ones shout with hands hesitantly put forward: 'I don't ask, give it me'.

I must stop. I have made no attempt to spare your feelings. Such weakness is forbidden by the high level of the debate. It searches one's heart through and through. But believe me and ask Gandhi to believe me, I have always been and shall always be his and your affectionate brother

V. S. SRINIVASAN

[The sequel has, I am sure, proved that Shri Sastriar's fears were false. Part of the letter was the subject of Gandhiji's comment in *Harijan* published soon after.—M.D.]

[In the *Harijan* of September 30, 1939 Gandhiji makes a reference to this letter. 'A friend between whom and me there never is any mental reservation, thus writes in anguish rather than anger: "In the not improbable \* \* \* \*, but I am not confident any more." I can only assure him that, notwithstanding my recent writings, he can retain his confidence that I would give the same advice as he expects I would have given before, or as I gave to the Czechs and Abyssinians. My non-violence is made of sterner stuff. It is firmer than the firmest metal known to the scientists. Yet, alas! I am painfully conscious of the fact that it has still not attained its native firmness'.

The earnestness and 'affectionate vehemence' of Sastriar's criticism will be understood when it is realised that he believes that Gandhiji's faith in non-violence has always been absolute. 'And Gandhi really was prepared to go the whole length. He would pursue the principle of non-resistance to evil to the utmost logical extremity. He was quite ready to give his whole life to it. He was quite ready, also, to give the lives of his family, his friends and his followers. He was prepared to give the life of the whole human race to it. So I once heard that great Indian statesman, Srinivasa Sastri, say.' (Sir Francis Younghusband: *Dawn in India*.) When in August 1940 Gandhiji proclaimed again the non-violence doctrine, 'unadulterated and pure' Sastri rejoiced.]

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*Confidential.*

SVAGATAM, MYLAPORE, MADRAS

16th July 1940

Dear Brother

Answering a Punjabi's question, you write in the "Harijan" of the 13th instant: "But I am quite sure that those who do not believe in non-violence cannot belong to the Congress." True. But see what follows. Those who ought by this test to be in the Congress are out—you, frontier Gandhi and others of like fibre. Those who ought by this test to be out of it are in. Strange result after about twenty years of undisputed sway. The saddest part of this sad story is that among the dubious Congressmen there are many that still believe they practise non-violence. Little do they see that in the high altitude of truth partial rectitude is no rectitude. Those that place ethical values above all other values must have great satisfaction to see you at last disentangling yourself from this Serbonian bog. It is a noble enterprise, when one comes to think of it calmly, to make divinity out of

human clay. Failure in it is noble too. In arithmetic zero is zero. In human affairs, on the contrary, transactions of immense magnitude may end in zero, but have not been fruitless. Experience, wisdom, proved strength are enormous gains, though for the moment we seem like Sisyphus, doomed to roll up the stone again from the bottom. Go on, brave soul, your faith is inextinguishable, it is not of this earth. Yet, the question keeps on vexing me: how, after the hollowness of the Congress creed has been exposed as by the touch of Ithuriel's spear, you continue to champion its resolution and commend it to the acceptance of Britain. No doubt you have made the Congress, and you love India as few of her children do. These facts go far to explain it. But they cannot justify it from the philosophical standpoint. When you perform these feats, you remind me of our Advaitic disputants, who jump with marvellous agility from the *pāramārthika* plane to the *vyāvahārika* plane, and while proclaiming to the skies the One and Only One, can with the same breath belaud the trinity and the thirty three crores of gods and uphold all the superstitions, absurd practices and cruel wrongs that they find around them. They have a valid plea, however, which is denied to you. To them there are two degrees of truth, one Absolute and one Seeming, interdependent in a mysterious way, but distinct for purposes of reasoning. You have no such double standard, what is not truth is untruth. Non-violence is the highest dharma, it is synonymous with Universal Love, which is a long name for God. Violence is its stark negation, it is blasphemy, sin. Partial abandonment of non-violence is abandonment. How can you have truck with it? Don't complain that I hold you rigidly to the letter of a particularly hard rule of conduct, sharp as a sword's

edge. Some friends defend you on the footing—rather beneath you—that you are a politician, above other politicians in aim and method and achievement, but still a politician limited by the very nature of politics. I judge you as a saint who has the gift of seeing truth and the courage to experiment with it,—and in the experiment has had more success than most saints so called. That is why I rejoiced in your enunciation and proclamation of the non-violence doctrine, unadulterated and pure, though the Philistine world jeered. Nor can you put me off by an outburst of your humility and confession of inconsistency, weakness, corruption of the soul and so on. This only exalts you the more in my hero-worshipping mind, making your merits the more lustrous and your blemishes, alas, the more glaring. I place you alongside the philosophers and ethicists of fame. The pursuit of abstract thought and the practice of austerities belong to us in India by heredity. To see you descend on occasions from the heights, I feel bereft of my natural garment, disrobed of my national pride.

\* \* \* \* \*

## II

Let us take our stand for a while on the plane of *vyāvahārika*, that is to say, practical politics. You are a new convert to the idea of independence for India and have the zeal of a new convert. How shall I dare to perform *śuddhi* on you and reconvert you to the wholesome aim of Congress tradition, *viz.*, Dominion Status? When your method of preserving independence is taken account of, you will be found the sole occupant of your platform. Is there another like you who says: "Remove all temptation to the foreign invader. Strip yourselves bare, bare of wealth and of the means of wealth. Let him

take your bodies, if he will; keep your souls to yourselves. He will soon tire of his conquest and leave you in peace " ? It is neither the thought nor the language of other advocates of independence. You don't belong where you are.

When you ask Britain to admit that India is free or declare that India shall be free from a certain date, you ask for the impossible. South Africa and Eire have not asked for it. The right to secede at will is equivalent to independence. This right has been openly claimed by both Dominions, and no one in authority has raised a voice of protest from the British side. No one will venture to do so. It is a very different thing to demand a resolution or Act of Parliament declaring or granting in express terms the right of secession. Why shall we not be realists for once and rest content with Dominion Status, of which we now know the implicit as well as the explicit significance? You recently said that Dominion Status will go after the war or change beyond recognition. Let it. We shall be no worse than the other Dominions. The declaration of independence which is famous in history was made by the United States of America after a victorious war; Britain, so far from granting it, would not even acknowledge it for many years afterwards. George Washington was a rebel for a long time in the purblind pages of British diplomacy. His statue was allowed to be erected in London only in 1923, when I saw Lord Curzon, the prim embodiment of imperialism, unveil it.\* The Congress

[\* Attempts to verify this incident have not proved quite successful. A bust of Washington was unveiled on the 30th of May 1921 by the American Ambassador at St. Paul's Cathedral. If Mr Sastri refers to this event, memory has played strange tricks on him.]

and you believed, or allowed yourselves to be persuaded, when the war began in earnest, that your demand of independence would be complied with. As the war grows more grim, you are confirmed in that belief. True, Britain could be squeezed today if things were normal in India. I mean you would obtain your desire if Britain could be sure that she would gain more than she would lose by compliance. She calculates that she would be worse off in the result. Who can gainsay it with confidence? My own opinion, I am so ignorant it isn't worth much, is that Muslim displeasure is a greater minus than Congress adhesion is a plus. Nobody can gauge the precise extent of Jinnah's influence. As a man and as a politician he has developed unexpectedly. \* \* Nevertheless Congress is unable to ignore or neglect him; how can the British Government do so? The risk is great.

It profits little now to blame the Hindu-Muslim tension on Britain. I saw and heard too much in 1930 and 1931 in London to dispute the fact. Whatever else I may forget, I shall never forget the utter humiliation and shame of the Indian party at the R. T. C. The British press and the average British politician—there were honourable exceptions—did not care to conceal their glee at every exhibition of unreason and obstinacy on the part of the Aga Khan, Shafi and Jinnah. Like the victims of Circe's witchery, we assumed brutish forms and degraded ourselves; alas, some of us were proud of our fate, while the others were the more miserable for consciousness of our shame. Why bewail it now? We can't abolish Jinnah, any more than we can abolish Britons. Your sovereign remedy of overwhelming generosity is impotent here. Perhaps, if left to yourself, you would still out-Quixote Quixote. Savarkar, however, is wide awake and

won't let you. Pray do not one fine morning advise us to try the expedient, for five short years only, of dividing India and the political power in India fifty-fifty between our brothers and ourselves. Even I shall reject the advice out of hand.

To sum up: Independence at Britain's hand is out of the question. Independence of Britain the fortune of war may thrust upon us (God forbid it). But independence we shall neither get nor keep.

\* \* \* \* \*

### III

Rajaji's resolution in my judgement is foredoomed by being coupled with the independence demand. Consistency and prestige perhaps require it, but neither of these is an all-important consideration. You have never allowed the paramountcy of either. Given proper cause, you will sacrifice both. I shall now try to show proper cause. I know neither Rajaji nor you are too ready to defer to other people's judgement; but that shan't deter me.

Let me paraphrase the W. C. C.'s offer to Britain. Grant our independence and in earnest thereof nationalise the Central Government. We shall abandon non-violence and harness all India's resources in your aid. This would have been adequate, when India was involved only as a part of the British Empire. Now India is directly endangered, her ruin is more than a possibility, even if she escaped foreign aggression—not likely in my view—she is certain to suffer long from acute internal disorder, the horrors of which stagger the imagination. It is the clear duty now of the strongest and the most patriotic party to grasp at every opportunity of acquiring power and using it for the protection of the people, subordinating



and postponing for the moment *all* other considerations, including independence. Instead, Rajaji's position, stated briefly, is: "Congress can't do its best, till India is independent or declared so. Because you don't enable us to do our best, we won't do even what we can, though for our own people's primary needs." I do not personally know the conditions elsewhere in the country. \* \* \* We are scared to think of the severe exactions and tyrannies to which the general population will be subjected. Any Madrassi will tell you my fears are not fanciful. Not content with boycotting the War Committees and the Civic Guards, the Congress party has set about organising its own corps for internal defence. A more disastrous step it is difficult to conceive. The Muslims are busy arming themselves. So are and will soon be many other aggressive communities. What will be the plight of the unhappy people with these rival bands of crudely armed and undisciplined men? Will they be defenders of the public or scourges of the public?

Suppose now, on the contrary, the W. C. C. directed the men who were Ministers in the Provinces to resume office and take into their hands the expansion of the regular Police and other measures necessary for the protection of the people. Will it not immediately restore the confidence of the public and dispel the fear of anarchy which is now widespread and may soon demoralise the inhabitants of the villages? Power carries responsibility; Congressmen may not say now to the harassed citizen: "you must suffer till the Britisher yields". Will you not shake off your prepossessions and obsessions and order the provincial parliamentarians back to their posts of duty? Tell them that peaceful existence is prior to indepen-

dence, and that Britishers and Muslims may be disposed of later. Those who itch for Sinn Fein methods may well wait. Those who trust in negative methods like walk-outs, abstinence and non-co-operation will do well to remember that Nature has evolved a variety of forms and plans and that, when necessity compels, there is no impropriety or loss of honour in changing the strategy or venue of a campaign.

So soon after your emphatic witness to the sanctity of non-violence, it seems rather bold of me to ask you, not merely to tolerate, but to inculcate and enjoin the increased employment of the police and auxiliary agencies of violence. But we have by common consent descended to the level of *vyavahara*. Though the W. C. C. have made a major deviation from the path prescribed by you, they seem to look to you for guidance in all other matters, and it is not unusual for you to interpose your matchless authority in conditions made for you rather than by you.

Finally, I ask forgiveness for the freedom with which I have set forth my views. Like a teacher I have no doubt laboured the obvious. Like an irresponsible critic I have alternately found fault and exhorted. Like an anxious son of India I have perhaps painted a lurid picture and alarmed you unnecessarily. Put down these lapses partly to ignorance and partly to over-wrought nerves. You have access to knowledge which is beyond my reach. While you are at the centre and hear the authentic voices, I am far away and hear only faint and distorted echoes. Don't trouble to reply. Only in these days of active espionage and censorship I should like to be sure that this letter has reached you. Let Mahadeva Desai send me a line to

say so. I long to see his beautiful hand again and taste once more his unruffled urbanity and gentle strength.

With love as ever, yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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SEVAGRAM

20th July 1940

My dear Brother

I have your long letter—but not long enough for me. You do me less than justice when you say neither R (Rajaji) nor I are too ready to defer to others' judgement. This can never be true of you. But there are some differences between us which our mutual love and regard cannot get over. I have much to say about your letter, but I know you don't want me to argue. Please believe me; no word of yours to me is without its effect. I fancy I am in God's good hands. M (Mahadev Desai) will write.

Love,

Yours

M. K. GANDHI

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SEVAGRAM

21st July 1940

Revered Sir

Your long letter proves the intensity of your attachment for Bapu, and let me assure you that it has been no waste of effort. Nothing that you say to him can go unheeded, and at this juncture all the 'loud thinking' of esteemed friends like you is needed—especially when one is sure that at the back of all you say is intense prayerfulness.

All the thinking that is revealed by your letter can have been no effort to your great intellect, but the writing itself must have meant considerable physical exertion when I

know you are none too well. That makes your earnestness doubly dear and valuable.

Perhaps you do not know that at Delhi he tried to do something on the lines of what you have suggested at the end of your letter, but he failed. Rajaji's own earlier proposition was somewhat akin to yours. But he had to take up a more uncompromising attitude to enlist the support of others, which nevertheless he ultimately failed to get!

But why do you quarrel with Bapu's commending of the resolution to all those who want India to help Britain violently? Is it as bad as our Advaitists swallowing huge camels on the *vyāvahārika* plane? All life is a compromise in a smaller or a greater degree. One who proclaims *महं ब्रह्मास्मि*<sup>1</sup> has to eat and drink and do many another thing like other humble folks to whom it is an abracadabra. But he goes through life's affairs with *anāsakti*<sup>2</sup> which I grant is rarely achieved by the bulk of us. All I would humbly claim on behalf of my master is that he has achieved, by incessant practice of the Gita teaching, some of that *anāsakti*, and though therefore he holds aloft the banner of brahmacharya, he can bless pure married life, and though he will not swerve from non-violence in thought, word and deed he can bless even the violent resistance of one who is about to be crushed by a tyrant.

And let me here pick a bone with you. Your staunch rationalism seems to me to sort ill with the old Liberal belief in the Britisher being here in India by divine dispensation and that for the welfare of India he should

1 I am Brahman.

2 Detachment.

be here<sup>24</sup> यावच्चन्द्रदिवाकरौ।<sup>3</sup> I had thought you at least were free of that belief, but the way in which you shrink from Independence shows that you cherish the belief as much as some of our old revered Liberals used to do.

But I will not attempt to argue.

Did you get the Autobiography? And did you notice that I carried out your orders to the letter?

Yours affectionately  
MAHADEV

### THE RAMAYANA: A FRAGMENT

[Gandhiji's devotion to *The Ramayana* is well-known. See *Autobiography*, pp. 48 and 420. Sastriar's devotion to *Valmiki* will appear from the footnotes.]

SABARMATI

11th January 1928

My dear Brother

I have your sweet letter. It reminded me of the Headmaster in Tiruppur who, having been your pupil, told me that you were as much master of Sanskrit as of English. I did not know this. I have read Valmiki only in translation and that indifferently. It is Tulsidas I swear by. But I admit all you say and would yet hold that Sita did go to the forest in spite of Rama's wish to the contrary. And in doing so, she excelled herself. Similarly did Rama excel himself in carrying out the promise of Dasaratha. But I am arguing to no purpose.

<sup>24</sup> Writing to a friend about this letter Mr Sastri said: 'Of course Mahadeva is exaggerating when he invokes the sun and moon. Not Ranade, not Mehta, nor Gokhale ventured to peer far into the future. They were pious men. Though I have not the same piety, I am enabled by training and disposition to follow them.'

<sup>3</sup> As long as the sun and moon last.

For we are alone in the homage we owe to Rama and Sita.

I am watching your movements<sup>25</sup> and prize copies of your letters to Sir Mohamed (Habibullah).

You will have to prolong your stay if you are to put your great work on a sure foundation. Please do.

With love,  
M. K. GANDHI

The following extract from a letter of S throws light on G's letter:—

Gandhi's letter to me on the Ramayana question is really in his best style. I was in South Africa at the time. In a speech to women in Travancore State he had told them that Sita disobeyed her husband in following him to the forest, and that a husband's order could therefore be set aside when there was sufficient cause. I wrote protesting against the obvious misreading of Valmiki. I had no objection to the teaching of disobedience, but to the citation of Sita as an authority for it. Sita pleaded with Rama for leave to accompany him, and went so far as to say, "How foolish was my father to give me to you—who are but a woman in man's garb?" This spirited exclamation, so entirely natural and honourable to a Kshatriya maiden, is seized upon by our Panditry as an indictment against Sita's perversity of spirit. Anyway, Rama in the end yielded to her entreaty and gave her leave to share the trials of the forest.

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[The following letter written in reply to a request that S should write a critique of *The Ramayana* is printed here as it throws light on his devotion to the epic.]

COIMBATORE

14th June 1941

My dear Jagadisan

I have not touched an English book since coming here. The Ramayana is my only study. On that immortal epic

one wants to say nothing which is not one's ripest thought. My ideas show yet no sign of having ripened. Not that my mind changes frequently or my appreciation waxes and wanes. But I seem to shrink from final judgement, like a man who beholds a vast panorama and is dazed, being unable to seize the ensemble in one view, where each detail holds him under a spell. If I said one thing to-day ten to one I should have to unsay it before a month is over. When I am full of confidence, I can give in vague words the headings of chapters of my grand critique. The assembling of points worthy of note should, I fancy, be the first task. But it will take a life with my measure of work.

Curious sense one has of propriety. On other topics one is not held back by such notions of perfection. But on the Ramayana, a tentative opinion is blasphemy.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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SEVAGRAM

9th July 1940

Dear Brother

Have just read your letter.<sup>26</sup> Your detachment is simply wonderful. Bapa<sup>27</sup> is an authority on many

26 Sastriar's letter, which is not available now, was written from Poona in the midst of an anxious crisis in the Society. This fact explains G's reference to S's detachment.

27 A. V. Thakkar, known as Thakkar Bapa.

things—road making, Harijans, Bhils, Society's affairs, forlorn causes, etc. But I never knew that he was an authority on interpreting Tulsidas. I should still cite Sita's example for our women. My incitement has never gone beyond. But I must not weary you. Keep me always on the straight and narrow path.

Love

M. K. GANDHI

[The following passage from a letter of the period explains some points in Gandhiji's letter:—

'You ask whether I have written to the Mahatma. I have. This is how I began: "Let me draw your attention for a few moments from matters that scarcely matter to a matter that greatly matters." A jingle, you say. But it would have done him good. I recurred to a literary error of his of the year 1927, when I was in South Africa. You know all about it. Tulsidas was the authority he relied on. Well; during my Poona fortnight I got Mr Thakkar to read the Ayodhyākānda of Tulsidas, and he was positive at the end that Gandhiji had no support there. In fact he was surprised that Sita was throughout only beseeching and imploring in the most humble style and forbore to use any harsh expression,—certainly no taunt like that which Valmiki puts into her mouth: "I wonder my father gave me to you, who are a woman in man's form." I showed my letter to Thakkar before posting it and said that Gandhi would be true to himself and admit no error which was not Himalayan. You shall judge whether I knew my Gandhi;—read his reply.

Thakkar has given me the copy of Tulsidas which he read for this purpose,—with an affectionate inscription. My heart felt a moment's exaltation.']

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4

Gandhi's motto would be: 'Faith is the evidence of things not seen.' The one shrinks from positions because he needs must prove all things; the other marches fearlessly on from the known to the unknown & in faith which is the evidence of things not seen. But the indissoluble bond of charity binds them. Even though they differ violently from Gandhi, Sastri has boundless faith in his earnestness and sincerity and he believes that even when he seems to him to err, he errs in good faith and with the readiness ever to be corrected. If all friendships were founded on that solid rock, they would surely endure until the end of time and stand the strain of the sharpest differences. I can only hope and pray with Gandhi that this deep spiritual friendship - spiritual because based on a grasp of the deeper things of the spirit - may spread like the leaven in the lump of our public life and ultimately the whole of our social fabric.

Yours sincerely  
V. K. Desai

MAHADEVA DESAI ON THE GANDHI-SASTRI FRIENDSHIP

Tele. "Servindia," Poona.

Telephone : 370

When replying please quote

No.

Servants of India Society,

Poona 4.

3/4/35

My dear Mahadeva, yesterday

I spent some time looking into grammar and composition treatises before I chose Fowler's book. In its field it is nonpareil. Nobody will question its authority. Later books there are in plenty but they don't come anywhere near it.

I transcribe a paragraph from one of these numerous books. The writer is clever, but grossly overstates his case. The debatable ground is large, in fact too large, and writers and publishers vary greatly in their practice. In this very paragraph I could mention three or four places where I should have

SASTRIAR'S LETTER TO MAHADEVA DESAI

## SOME LETTERS TO MAHADEVA DESAI

[The following letters are the result of Shri Sastriar's kind acceptance to go through the first edition of my translation of Gandhiji's Autobiography (briefly Auto.) and to make corrections therein of language and diction. In spite of his ill-health and pre-occupations as Vice-Chancellor he found time to do the affectionate 'drudgery' for me and most of the improvements in the second edition are entirely due to him. His precision and punctiliousness have been of immense value, and though he has asked me not to reveal this debt, I think I must acknowledge the debt now without any violence to his susceptibilities.—M.D.]

NAGPUR

12th March 1935

My dear Mahadeva Desai

I am very very grateful for yesterday. You are, like Gandhi, a veritable fountain of tenderness and hospitality.

I'll remember the Auto.<sup>1</sup> I ought not to have lost sight of it.

Miss Cornelia Sorabji has a nasty reference to Gandhiji in her recent book "India Calling". Have you seen it?

1 In his preface to the second edition of Gandhiji's Autobiography (May 1940), Mahadeva Desai said: 'It (the translation) has now undergone careful revision, and from the point of view of language, it has had the benefit of careful revision by a revered friend, who, among many other things, has the reputation of being an eminent English scholar. Before undertaking the task, he made it a condition that his name should on no account be given out. I accept the condition. It is needless to say it heightens my sense of gratitude to him'.

I enclose a copy of Lady Minto's footnote.<sup>2</sup> I don't send the reference to Gokhale in the body of the book. It is not relevant; the author drags in her talk to Gandhiji. If you don't mind I should like a comment by you on it. Let it be as brief as you please. Perhaps I shall use it in my review of the book for the *Servant of India*; perhaps I shall reserve it for an extended course of lectures on Gokhale in June.

Please direct your reply to the S. I. S., Poona 4.

Yours very affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

[' Yesterday ' refers to a day spent with us by him at Maganwadi.—M.D.]

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POONA 4

21st March 1935

My dear Mahadeva Desai

When I read your book first, I made notes on the last page. But it was only last night I was able to reduce them to writing. They will be intelligible, I trust.

2 In her "India, Minto and Morley" (p. 20), Lady Minto records a conversation she had with Gandhiji in 1932. "Do you remember my name?" I asked "Remember your name!" exclaimed Mr Gandhi. "The Minto-Morley Reforms have been our undoing. Had it not been for the separate Electorates then established we should have settled our differences by now." "You forget, Mr Gandhi" I replied, "that the separate Electorates were proposed by your leader and predecessor, Mr Gokhale." "Ah!" said Mr Gandhi, with a smile, "Gokhale was a good man, but even good men may make mistakes."

When I write next, I shall give two or three instances of how I should like the punctuation improved.

Please ask without hesitation why certain changes have been suggested, if the reasons are not apparent. You have been very deferential, in fact excessively so; and I should feel guilty indeed if I had taken advantage of it and become a fault-finder for the fun of it.

I shall soon send you back, in case you have no copy, the note you kindly gave me on Lady Minto's reference to Gandhi. My wish is that you should submit it to his inspection and get his approval. When you have done so, please add a sentence at the end of the note to say that Gandhi has approved it. You needn't trouble him for one of his own.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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POONA 4

28th March 1935

My dear Mahadev

I am at work on the Auto, and making good progress.

One general improvement occurs to me. On each page you may give the year to which it relates—1907, 1925, etc. Recently, wishing to find out the date of Gandhi's first meeting with Gokhale, I had to turn several pages back, and it took me ten minutes to be sure.

Would you let me drop some first person singulars? An autobiography must necessarily abound in them, but in your text it is possible without making any change in the syntax to get rid of a good many. The omission is not

*required* by grammar or idiom, but will be in the nature of improvement.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

*P. S.*—Have you seen R. B. Gregg's "The Power of Non-violence"? Do you approve of it? Is there any general qualification or caution you would recommend to the reader?

V. S. S.

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POONA 4

1st April 1935

My dear Mahadeva

In two days I'll send you the first volume of the *Auto*. You will see I haven't made much use of the liberty you were good enough to give me. I'll venture further in going through the second volume. Please return the first when you have looked through it so that I may deal with it a little less tenderly.

The comma is a bugbear. Rules will help only slightly. I should advise you to read the great classics, say two or three, with special attention to punctuation. Journals like the *Times* or the *Manchester Guardian* will also be useful.

Another knotty point as to which you seem innocent is the distinction between restrictive adjectival clauses and co-ordinating adjectival clauses. The former are never separated from the main sentence by a comma, the latter always are. The relative *that* may be used only to introduce the former. *Who* and *which* are used for both.

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The distinction is somewhat hard for the beginner. You won't find it difficult at all, though for a long time individual cases will worry you, especially when a doubt assails you. If you will let me do so, I'll choose a recent treatise on composition and give you a copy. Don't forbid me.

Curiously enough, I have just now received a letter from Mr Gregg in which he says he has sent me a copy of his book. I shall get it by the next mail perhaps.

I get the *Harijan* but seldom read it. I read the first few issues with care. To speak the truth, it doesn't interest me.

You must answer a query, if you can. On page 551 of the first volume there is a footnote. It concerns Sister Nivedita, whom once Gokhale appears to have called 'volatile'. What has 'Young India' of 30th June 1927 to say on the topic? I do not expect the precise reference, but may be you remember all about it and can tell me. Pity I never met her though I've heard a lot of her and read much of her writing too.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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POONA 4

3rd April 1935

My dear Mahadev

I spent some time yesterday looking into grammar and composition treatises before I chose Fowler's book. In its field it is nonpareil. Nobody will question its authority. Later books there are in plenty, but they don't come anywhere near it.

I transcribe a paragraph from one of these numerous books. The writer is clever, but grossly overstates his case. The debateable ground is large, in fact, too large, and writers and publishers vary greatly in their practice. In this very paragraph I could mention three or four places where I should have punctuated differently from the writer. That is not, however, to say that no rules can be laid down or need be observed. Some over-punctuate as a rule, others under-punctuate. But a careful study of the practice of good writers reveals a considerable body of agreement, which is reducible to definite rules. To neglect these is to incur the charge of ignorance or carelessness and cause the educated reader some confusion and even annoyance.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

### TYRANNIES OF PUNCTUATION

A correspondent asked me to give him certain precise rules in punctuation. I replied that I knew of none, and that if I did should refuse to be bound by them. Yet modern grammars will give you fifty rules which must seemingly be obeyed, and which purport to cover the field. Cobbett knew that no two writers use the same punctuation, and that they never will; and having imparted all safe information he ends thus: "You will now see that it is quite impossible to give any *precise rules* for the use of these several points. Much must be left to taste: something must depend upon the weight which we may wish to give to particular words or phrases; and something on the seriousness or the levity of the subject on which we are writing".

In other words, punctuation is nearly as much a matter of an author's style as his choice of words.

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POONA 4

4th April 1935

My dear Mahadeva

In the course of my reading to-day I came upon the passage overleaf. It gives a strange, but by no means untrustworthy, measure of the world-wide popularity acquired by Gandhi. It occurs in 'The Broadcast Word' by A. Lloyd James.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

Having mentioned some hard feats of pronunciation, the author proceeds:

But you can't do these things to the satisfaction of everybody. There is always a somebody to write to you on club note paper to tell you that Gandhi's name has a *long* vowel, and a somebody ready to tell you that any Tom, Dick or Harry ought to know that Gandhi's name has a *short* vowel.

---

BASAVANGUDI

11th June 1936

My dear Mahadev

I am sorry to engage your attention so much. It isn't a big issue after all.

I endorse and applaud your sentiment: "There is nothing in the world equal to an understanding of those from whom we differ". It is beautifully put. Your good offices and those of the Mahatma are always available

in this sphere. May I say I am grateful for the effort which, as you state in your letter, has already been made?

But, for this purpose, it is not necessary that Mr Nehru should be induced to give me a copy of his book. If he were to give a copy to each person that stands in his circle of acquaintance at the distance at which I stand, he should give away thousands. What he would not do in the natural course, he need not be made to do. He wouldn't hesitate to act on the Mahatma's suggestion. But in a corner of his mind the thought might occur: "Why am I asked to do this?"

I won't labour it any more. My request still is that you forbear to write.

Let me switch your mind to another topic. I have been thinking of Kodanda Rao's alleged misdemeanour. My guess is that a well-meant piece of advice has been twisted into a deliberate opposition to Hindi. My experience, which is also his, in South Africa enables me to imagine what might have happened. The Indian community might have requested the local government to help in the teaching of Hindi. The government perhaps turned down the request. A dispute might thus have arisen. Kodanda Rao, with a Liberal's incurable desire for peace, might have tried to persuade our countrymen not to make a grievance out of the incident, and in the course of the inevitable controversy, might have argued that their chief aim should be to become good citizens of Trinidad and British Guiana, and that it was not necessary for them in their circumstances *there* to reproduce every single movement in the Motherland. I remember a scrape into which I got in Kimberley by a perfectly innocent observation of the sort. There are people everywhere who seek to

establish their zeal in a cause by accusing others of a lack of it.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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ANNAMALAINAGAR

3rd May 1938

My dear Mahadev

Now and then I remember the duty<sup>3</sup> which I have long neglected, and then a sense of shame and repentance passes through me like an arrow. But soon inertia overpowers me, and the task is again laid aside.

I am about to lay down my office and settle at my home in Mylapore. The volumes went in advance of me and are there now. May I draw on your patience somewhat more? I have perhaps drained it fully, but hope I have not.

The times are big with events. Your chief bears a load of responsibility beyond human strength. He is constantly in my thoughts, as in those of most Indians.

His recent statement on Mysore—a demand for the establishment of popular Government—is unfortunate. It may create more trouble in all the States.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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3 Of revising and correcting the second volume of the Autobiography.

ANNAMALAINAGAR

2nd July 1939

My dear Mahadev

I have just resumed the revision of the Autobiography. I had gone as far as the 268th page. How curious, as I read of Parsi Rustomji's penitence, I thought of mine! May I never disappoint you again as he didn't disappoint your master!

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

ANNAMALAINAGAR

7th July 1939

My dear Mahadev

While you are immersed in Frontier problems, a registered book packet will reach you. You will find with immense relief that it is the Autobiography.

Though I own to a feeling of relief also, I regret it is not accompanied by a sense of satisfaction. I have not done it as thoroughly as I could have done it. I might revise the two volumes yet and bring some uniformity into the work. But it means a few more weeks with the untoward possibilities of those weeks. Why take the risk?

It seems a hollow offer, but it is not. If it should cross your mind, when the new edition is about to be struck off, that I might be given a chance of looking over the final proofs, don't hesitate to lay the injunction on me that I should complete the task before a certain date. The

Mahatma is fond of fixing dates for tasks! But I know, and feel shame in confessing it, I may not expect a second bestowal of confidence in me.

So let me take leave for the moment with the reminder (to you) that my name should never be disclosed in the preface or introduction or press notices. The fewer the people that are let into the secret the better.

With loving regards as ever,

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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POONA

17th March 1942

My dear Mahadev

Your letter of the 15th, received today, was a joy. I thank you from the heart.

Jagadisan has sent me some passages from a recent letter of yours, in which you describe the friendship between Gandhi and me in words that combine beauty and truth so as to produce a rare effect. You proceed to contrast our natures and point out with justice that, while I stop short where reason fails, Gandhi marches on, upheld by faith. Let me add by way of supplement, not as a criticism, for I have no quarrel with your thesis, that I would fain listen to faith, which has a strange fascination for me, and that Gandhi on many occasions shrinks from the lengths to which faith would draw him. That is where common human nature comes in; no distinction can reach down to the bottom.

An illustration is ready to hand. Recently, under the caption 'Criminal Assaults', Gandhi advised women at

the mercy of ravishers to use nails and teeth where non-violence had failed. In the current *Harijan* similar precepts are taught. If the non-violent way is not clear, Gandhi recommends organisation for *armed defence against robbers and dacoits*. Again: the work has perforce to be done by the evacuees, violently, non-violently or both ways. Am I incurably stupid at some point in the reasoning? Can this be the deliberate teaching of the apostle of non-violence? Is *ahimsa* only the preferable of the two legitimate courses, the one which has the right of prior trial but may properly be abandoned as soon as its inadequacy is perceptible? Time was when I understood *himsa* to be the antithesis of *ahimsa*, to be abhorred as much as the other was to be worshipped; the one was away from God, the other towards Him.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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## LETTERS TO HIS DAUGHTER

SIMLA

9th September 1916.

My dear Rukmini<sup>1</sup>

I was present at a great party in the Viceregal Lodge last night. We were a large crowd of people and formed a long long procession of rickshaws crawling up inch by inch along the steep half a mile that leads to the porch. I had to wait ten minutes before I could enter the door of the hall, so many were the ladies and gentlemen. The Indians were comparatively few and scattered, but I was lucky to find four or five clinging together and joined them. After a little while the Viceroy and Lady Chelmsford appeared and took their stand in a large room, where we *marched past them in single file*, each gentleman's or each lady's name being called by one of the *aides-de-camp* in waiting. Most people had their visiting cards and gave them to the A. D. C. to read. Owing to some mistake, I have not got my cards yet. But I had the enclosed invitation card in my pocket and the A. D. C. called out my name from it, 'Mr. Avargal'. When the long presentation was over we took our seats in a beautiful brightly lit hall. The concert began and continued for nearly two hours. It was apparently very good of its kind for even we could enjoy it. A lady in particular sang exquisitely, showing marvellous powers of voice. They encored her often, I think she appeared four times, each time singing a different song. It was twelve midnight when the programme ended. Most of the guests

1 Mrs Rukmini Sundaram, born 1903.

went in for a parting drink, and I saw a husband and wife quarrelling and making it up in two minutes. A good many didn't stay to drink but went out. I was among these. The rickshawwallas waited outside looking out for their men. My man picked me out in no time; it was nearly one o'clock (next morning) when I came home. Kunzru and Vengu<sup>2</sup> were sound asleep. I crept in softly like a thief and taking off my clothes went to bed.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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AGRA

12th October 1916

My dear Rukmini

You have doubtless heard that I am now here, the guest of our Hirday Nath Kunzru. They are a large family of five brothers and children, all handsome, fair and intellectual, a fine type of the virtues and graces of the old Aryan race from which we are sprung.

Dina Nath Kunzru, junior to Hariji, took me to the Taj Mahal last evening. It is the finest building in India, some say in the world. Its situation is wonderful, being on the Jumna outside the city in a spacious well-laid-out park. I cannot describe its beauty or the delicacy of the marble-work, of which it is full without seeming to be excessively full. I had read many excellent descriptions, but the reality far exceeded the idea I had been able to form. By good luck it was full moon yesterday. We went again after ten o'clock and it was a glorious heavenly

<sup>2</sup> Mr Sastri's cook.



sight, bathed in the moonlight. We gazed on it from near, admiring the blend of the many-coloured stones and their marvellous brilliance as they playfully threw back the moon's beams. Then we withdrew to a distance and tried each in his own-way to realise the perfection of art which harmonized into one divine whole so many varied charms. Long we stayed on the grounds. Vengu dropped down to sleep. He had said 'good', 'wonderful' twice or thrice, observed that it must be seen during the day and for the rest perhaps felt bored by our historical reminiscences and musings. When we went, there was a thick mist and we had great misgivings, but the moon in her meridian power seemed to conquer all obstacles and shone proudly on the Taj which smiled and glowed in answering triumph.

You must see it once, I'll show it you, I promise.

Yours very affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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SIMLA

26th September 1917

My dear Rukmini

This is the last day of Council. Pandit Malaviya and Dr. Sapru leave day after to-morrow. I leave the day after *that* i.e., on the 29th instant and go to Allahabad.

There was a party last evening in the house of our Vice-President Mr Lowndes. The Viceroy and Lady Chelmsford were there. I was asked to join their select group at tea. Mrs Sarojini Naidu joined us soon; after a while I quietly moved off, leaving her in conversation

with the Viceroy. The Europeans treated me with attention, though I had attacked their large salaries and pensions in the morning in open Council. That is their great quality. They do not show their annoyance in some cases, and some of them do not even feel it. The Commander-in-Chief presented me to his wife as a fine speaker. Just as the guests were going away, I met Sarojini again. She told me the Viceroy had paid me a very great compliment. Asked who the best man in his Council was, he had said "Mr Sastri decidedly. He is a fine speaker, both his manner and matter are fine. If I wanted advice I should consult him sooner than others." I do not remember the exact words, she spoke in a whisper as we were both walking, and I didn't like to ask her to repeat the Viceroy's words. Besides this, I have heard enough to turn my head if I were younger.

Let not anybody see this letter except the members of our family. Of course Subrahmanya Aiyar and Venkatasubbiah and Hanumantha Rao may see it.

I long to be back with you all; but I fear it can't be before the third week of October, may be later. Tell Lakshmi I am always thinking of her and wishing she was in good health and cheerful spirits. Has school subdued Savitri?<sup>3</sup> Or is the dear thing as playful as ever?

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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<sup>3</sup> Mr Sastri's younger daughter who died a tragically premature death.

S. S. MANORA

*Saturday*

24th May 1919

My dear Rukmini

We are now in a most annoying situation. It is about noon. Ordinarily we should have been in London, but a fog came on us last night, and after drifting for a time, we were obliged to stop. They say we are about 60 miles yet from our destination. At 12 miles an hour, which is our average, we should take 5 hours. In fact, this part of the Channel being thickly mined, our boat will have to be piloted with great care, and it seems we are fated to pass another night on board. Hard lines. When I rose this morning, after the sun had looked in through the port hole and warmed our cabin, (it was only 5 o'clock) I was in high spirits and went through the morning wash and shave with great alacrity. Tea came much later about 6-15. (The day begins for the ship's crew only at 6). One by one Kelkar and Patel and lastly Kunzru also got up, and we packed up our things, leaving nothing outside except the clothes we were in and the purse, passport and other things carried in pockets. We likewise rallied Kelkar in elation over the loss of his wager; for he had maintained we should land only on Sunday while the others of us held out for Saturday (to-day). The event has decided in his favour; I have to shell out 10s. and Patel and Kunzru 5s. each. You see I was more rash than they. Our vexation knows no bounds. Satyamurti and I agreed most amiably at breakfast to overlook the odious laughter of that old lady and her forward daughter and tolerate the deficiencies of the menu and the stupidity of the waiter, because we were sure to see the last of them to-day. But how false are man's hopes! We must endure

them for yet another day, I mean these torments. Our white fellow-voyagers recognize the coast near us as Folkestone. It may be People's Pillar for anything we care so long as it is not London and our internment is prolonged.

Yours very lovingly

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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36, DRAYTON GARDENS, SOUTH KENSINGTON S.W. 10

9th July 1919

My dearest Rukmini

In my first letters to Lakshmi I have conveyed in feeble words the first wonderment I felt on coming here. Though I have seen a good deal now, that first feeling has not altogether left. London is enormous, and enormously rich. The parts where work-people live are reported to be bad, but I haven't visited them yet and couldn't tell. Elsewhere the streets are well laid out and the houses are nice looking. Every street has walking platforms on both sides and is paved with wooden bricks i.e. brick-like pieces of wood. It is extraordinary how the dust is laid by frequent watering. For its traffic London should be suffocating, but you don't see any dust. Some remote streets are quiet; but in most places the traffic is frightful. How men and women manage to move along is a standing wonder to me. The policeman is a marvel. He knows everything, and while having an eye on all sides and ordering carriages to stop or move on with his finger, stoops politely and gives you an answer. How ready it is! Down this road, then turn to the right, then the third turn to the left. An arch will be seen in front. Go through and you will see a board to your left. All this in half a minute: before you have half understood him, he is

mind his carriages or stooping to direct a lady. On a railway platform I once needed to be told. I asked an inspector. He said without seeming to think: "This platform; next train but one; change at Hammersmith; then another change at Notting Hill Gate." Everywhere you see buses, taxis, horse-carriages, trams—all full. Besides there are the underground trains and the tubes—both electric. These last run every  $2\frac{1}{2}$  minutes. People stand all along the corridor, hanging on to the straps. Still there is great complaint that there are not enough trains, and a Parliamentary Committee is sitting to consider how to improve the transport of London. I do not know how many railway stations there are,—not less than 300. Many of them are twice as big as Victoria Terminus in Bombay; 13 or 14 platforms is common. The tubes are unique in the world. They lie about 70 to 100 feet below ground. The stations are on the ground: you buy your tickets there and get into one of the lifts of which there are 5 or 6. You are taken down to the trains. Similarly when you alight from the trains you get into a lift and you are taken up to the ground. In many stations many tubes and underground railways meet; then it is a huge affair. The knowing man may guide himself by observing the notices and directions at every step; the stranger is bewildered and stands petrified with astonishment. Occasionally there are moving stairs. You get on the lowest and simply stand. The whole thing goes up and comes down another way! But you must see to understand.

Yours very affectionately,

V. S. SRINIVASAN.

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SOUTH KENSINGTON

17th August 1919

My darling Rukmini

To-day is Sunday. Being rather free, I propose to write you a few lines before going to bed, in case I should be too busy on Thursday next. You are so curious to know of this city and its people that I fancy the following will interest you.

A funny thing about the houses is that one floor is below ground. In it live the servants, and in a lodging-house the landlady and her people. The kitchen is there and the store-room. You go down to it by a flight of stairs. You must not suppose it is dark or stuffy. Far from it. It is airy, well-lighted, and sometimes quite nice. In this house, for instance, the best room is underground and they have put some good furniture there. Our landlady, having no maid at present, finds it hard to bring up our dinner to the second floor: so she requests us to go down there to eat, and we don't grudge it a bit.

Then you will be surprised as you walk along a street every door is closed. In India it would mean the inhabitants had gone away. Here the door is always shut and opened only when there are callers. On the door you have a knocker which the caller strikes against it; or there is a button which you press; or here is a knob of wood or brass which you pull out just a little. In the two latter cases a bell rings inside where a servant, generally a maid, is in waiting. She comes out and opens the door. In most houses bigger than the average, there are two knockers, buttons, or knobs, one marked 'visitors', and the other 'servants'. As soon as you enter, there is

a wooden frame for umbrellas, walking-sticks, hats, overcoats, etc. The servant generally takes such articles from you and puts them in the proper places. If he forgets or is too rude, you do it yourself. Then you say whom you wish to see and give your card or announce your name. If the house is of a good type, you will wait in the drawing-room into which you are shown; if not, you must wait till the party you want comes out or sends word you are expected. No room except the drawing-room will be open. Every door has a spring bolt which fastens when it is shut. The visitor must tap twice. The inmate will either say 'come in' or 'one minute please' if he puts on his coat or adjusts his chair to receive the arrival. Sometimes he opens the door, and you go in. If the door of any room is open, it means there is nobody in. The servant may go in and sweep or make the bed or change the linen or the water, etc. Even the servant must tap and enter only if told. The common type of room has a bed, a writing table with drawers, a wash-stand with a mirror, etc., a cupboard, and invariably there is a fire place and a chimney. You are supplied with a towel, two napkins, and various vessels to hold water. These are renewed once a week in well-ordered houses, the water every day of course. You can't come out unless you are fully dressed: in fact all day you must be in dress. There is usually a bath-room and the lavatory is separate. Often the two are in one and the same place. But the arrangements are so good that in either case it is convenient. The flushing is automatic and very efficient. The bath is made in a large porcelain tub in which one can lie down, about 3 feet deep, with two taps, one of cold, one of hot water. You let in as much of each as suits you.

People don't eat much at breakfast, which is between 8 and 9 a.m. The important day-meal is lunch between 1 and 2 p.m. Then there is afternoon tea at 4 or 4-30, which consists of bread, biscuits, cakes, 'tea. Dinner-fellows at 7 or 7-30. Some big folk take a light supper and drink about 11 or 11-30 before bed. After dinner people go out for enjoyment. They walk in parks and gardens or go to the theatres. By rule these last close at 11-30 or 12; so everybody returns home about midnight. The lighting is first-rate and the parks are both numerous and lovely, the seating accommodation being very good indeed. The theatres are innumerable and of a type far superior to any in India. I have seen only four so far. You get refreshments everywhere. Few persons go alone. The common rule is for a gentleman and a lady to keep each other company. There is no harm or mischief in this; it is a pretty and most agreeable national habit. It is such a delight, wherever you go, to see handsome young girls, attractively dressed, tripping it gaily, head erect and a charming smile on their lips. They say Paris shows divinely happy in this respect. I have not seen it. But I have seen some angel faces and lovely complexions in London.

Last Sunday I went to see Hampton Court, about 15 miles out, with a large and beautiful palace and a magnificent garden. The Indian soldiers were quartered there. The day being fine, immense crowds had come. But how little noise you heard! People stepped aside for you, they only whispered, and kept moving on without obstructing the way. Oh! the London crowds are wonderful—patient, silent, orderly, good-humoured and always polite and helpful to one another. At the tubes and trains and tram cars and buses, one saw long queues about half a



furlong long and three or four deep. No one would jostle or attempt to gain a place. Each took his or her turn patiently; if you gave a place to another, he or she would say, "No please; I will take my turn." Of course the rule of chivalry is, if a man is seated when a lady enters and can't find room, he must give her his seat. So in the underground trains and tubes, you sometimes see all the seats occupied by women and the men holding on to the leather straps all along the gangway. It is a pretty custom, the ladies saying 'thank you' in the act of displacing the man. In fact you hear nothing but 'please' and 'thank you' all the time. The manners of the people are extraordinarily polite. They say here the war has corrupted manners; girls, having entered the occupations, are becoming rude and masculine; the men are no longer as considerate and chivalrous to them as of old. Occasionally men are seen glued to their seats while some representatives of the other sex stand. But I have never yet seen a pretty-looking girl stand for the tenth part of a second without two men struggling to be the first to yield up their seats.

I will deal with some other things in a subsequent letter. Tell me whether you like this kind of thing.

Your most loving father  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

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NATIONAL LIBERAL CLUB, LONDON

27th August 1919

My dearest Rook

I was glad of your last letter. Dickens, I should have thought, would be beyond you just yet. Perhaps Sundaram<sup>4</sup> teaches you. Eh? Very good.

4 Mr Sastri's son-in-law.

I am well. I haven't quite understood the food yet and find it hard to regulate it. Once in a way I get real good Indian meals, and then it is a blessing.

London is getting cold. It will be uncomfortable by and by. If you like my last long letter tell me so. I will make time to write such things.

Hitherto I have been living away from the centre of things, so that much time was taken up in mere locomotion. Next week I shall move into this club. I expect it will be convenient.

Lakshmi is in good spirits, I trust. Don't let her droop. I am sorry she has a heavy burden, and I am not near, though, when I am near, I am not of much use, except to add to her labours! Poor girl, hasn't she been an angel to me? I am not half grateful enough. Tell her she will be rewarded in heaven; I can't reward her on earth.

Yours most lovingly

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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LONDON

3rd September 1919

My darling

I am enclosing a few things which, I hope, will interest you. The padded picture was put into my hands at Gibraltar as a Spanish beauty, but it made no impression on me, and I kept it away in my trunk. I came on it and forward it now. The menu card is for a dinner by Dr. Sapru. It is one of the swell hotels here. It is a

common practice for some of the guests to send round their menu cards with a request that those round the table should sign their names. I have signed half a dozen cards on one occasion.

The Indian mail this week has been delayed. I shall get mine only to-morrow (Thursday); but as it may be too late, I am writing these few lines to make sure of something for you in the hurry of the eleventh hour.

Tell Lakshmi I maintain my credit all round. The Secretary of State sent for me yesterday and consulted me on important matters. He added he might trouble me often like that while I stayed in this country. You must not show this letter or tell of this part of it to any one not of our family,—lest people should say I was boasting. My own flesh and blood are different and share my joys and sorrows without any feeling other than that of perfect sympathy and understanding.

I hope all are well at home. Are your eyes quite restored? And Sundaram—How is he? Give him my most affectionate greetings. How I wish I had wings so as to be with you all at once!

With every good wish, Your exiled father

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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LONDON

11th September 1919

My dearest Rukmini

I much regret I have to write without seeing your letter, which, owing to some delay in the mail, has not

yet arrived. I am hoping it contains nothing but good news and unfailing love from you all. You are all doing quite well, I trust. I am all right here, let Lakshmi be easy.

In my last letter I hinted I might have to go to South Africa. Since then I have learned that the Secretary of State has me in mind for the purpose. He himself told me so. There are still one or two difficulties in the way.<sup>5</sup>

5 The difficulties were not got over and Mr Sastri decided not to go to South Africa. The details will be clear from the following passage from a statement made by Mr Sastri in 1923: 'Lord Chelmsford's Government had proposed in 1920 that I should proceed along with Sir Benjamin Robertson to watch the Indian case before the Solomon Commission of Enquiry, which had just been appointed. The Government of General Smuts would have none of me, but as my name was pressed by our Government, they stipulated that I should be warned that I should be treated only as Sir Benjamin's social inferior. In answer to further enquiry they explained that owing to the activity of the Anti-Asiatic League the feeling against Indians was running so high that it might not be possible to find me suitable accommodation, that I might be subjected to indignities and that, if I accepted social inferiority from the start, I should have no right afterwards to complain of unequal treatment. Our Government protested against the extraordinary proposal and succeeded finally in getting my name accepted, but not without an expression of regret on the part of the Union Government that, owing to my association, it would not be possible to extend to Sir Benjamin Robertson all the courtesies and hospitalities to which a representative of the Government of India was entitled. I was by no means eager to drag Sir Benjamin to the black man's level, nor did I consider it wise for one who was to plead for the equality of his countrymen with other subjects of His Majesty to begin by admitting his own inferiority. In the end I felt constrained to decline in the circumstances to proceed to South Africa as the Government's representative.'

But if they are got over, my going is probable. I dare say you realise its importance and won't grudge the prolonged separation it involves. It is hard on Lakshmi, poor thing. Tell her I do not feel it any the less for my part: but it can't be helped. It is the country's work and must not be shirked.

I long to have a few lines about everybody, Sundaram, Sankaran, Savitri, and others.

With affection and love, Yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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NATIONAL LIBERAL CLUB, VICTORIA STREET, S.W. 1.

✓ 16th September 1919.

My dearest Rukmini

I got your letter the day after I had written mine. I am very happy to note the progress you are making both in your knowledge and power of expression. Is Sundaram to be thanked for it? Why, he ought to be congratulated!

I have been to four or five theatres so far. They are far superior to anything in India though I must say they will not satisfy puritanic tastes. But they portray human nature in its everyday form, exactly and strikingly. Amusement, and gratification of the aesthetic feeling, by music, dancing, and scenery and wonderfully varied and captivating dress—is their chief characteristic. But shrewd wit and criticism of contemporary life and manners are also there,—and likewise an interpretation, subtle and appealing, of the higher motives and deeper sentiments. I see more clearly and vividly than ever before what a great and noble instrument of education the stage is.

Yesterday we had a very enjoyable boating party on the Thames. Mrs. Haigh and her son, Hariji,\* Gupte (a Poona Vakil), and myself were there. We went as far as Richmond and saw on both sides lovely scenery. At Richmond we had tea at a historic restaurant and ate the "maids of honour". What they are the enclosed will tell. We found them delicious. Their reputation is not undeserved. It was very cold when we returned, but still enjoyable. To-morrow I am taking a party to the theatre, "the Palace",—it consists of Mrs. Haigh and son, two Indian ladies who have often fed me on Indian dishes, Mrs. Roy, and Mrs. Bhola Nath and myself. Hariji is going to Paris with Dr. Sapru and can't join.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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*Private*

2, FLAGSTAFF ROAD, DELHI

10th February 1921

My dear Rukmini

Sankaran and you have been very good to me this time. Lakshmi too is being kind. Otherwise I should be very anxious about Savitri.

Yesterday my seat was nearest the Duke of Connaught, to his left. It had a consequence. When the government people retired together, he inquired who I was, remarking

\* Pandit H. N. Kunzru.

that I had a striking countenance. The new Commander-in-Chief, Lord Rawlinson, observed that he read 'character' in my face. Other people said who I was, not forgetting my eloquence, ability and influence. Lord Rawlinson concluded by saying he had heard of me as a 'statesman'. Sapru, who overheard all this, reported it to me, saying Shafi and he noted the conversation, and said to each other they were proud. Mrs Besant added she was glad of the incident, and playfully cautioned me against becoming vain. Annamalai Chetti, to whom I mentioned the story, says he has been hearing excellent reports of me and thinks I can get anything I choose to ask.

I am perhaps foolish to write all this but can't keep it from Lakshmi, who must feel even more glad than I do. Mr K. C. Roy told me of two or three other things, of which I will write after confirmation.

Affectionately yours,

V. S. SRINIVASAN.

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BOMBAY

2nd April 1921

My dear Rukmini

You are a brave girl to say I should not be anxious about you: Well, I will try to dismiss anxiety from my mind but cannot wholly succeed.

Mrs Petit proposes to give me a dinner on the 15th night as a send off. I have just accepted it.

As I wrote Sankaran yesterday, I am going to Delhi to-night in the special train of the Government of India,—getting into the car of either Sarma<sup>6</sup> or Shafi.<sup>7</sup>

The Viceroy, Lord Reading, has a pleasant though wrinkled face. He is of medium height and browned by travel and hard work. His speech this morning was very good, full of excellent sentiments. The impression produced was very good. His voice is clear and ringing and betokens great vigour and firmness. I hear he can speak quite well but to-day he read out of a typewritten paper. Perhaps many thought so, but I alone (to my knowledge) perpetrated the identity. *Reading is reading!*

If I had gone last year to South Africa, I should have been subjected to great indignities. Sir Benjamin Robertson, who went and has returned, says the minister who invited me to lunch or dinner would have had to wait on me himself, for all the cooks and waiters had resolved to go on strike! This morning's paper says the Indians there would like me to go there now; but even if I should be venturesome, I couldn't think of going.

Yours affectionately  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

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BOMBAY

2nd April 1921

My dear Rukmini

I write this after the ceremonies of the day. The Viceroy was sworn in in all pomp at about 5-10. A

<sup>6</sup> Sir B. N. Sarma.

<sup>7</sup> Sir Muhammad Shafi.



mistake occurred, which is interesting. As he is a Jew, not a Christian, the Chief Justice of Bombay made him "solemnly affirm" instead of "solemnly swear", just as we Hindus do. But afterwards H. E. himself recollected that he should swear and kiss the Old Testament. The ceremony was accordingly done again in a very abridged form.

I enclose the plan of the Kaisar-i-Hind which brought the Viceroy and which is to take me. I have been promoted now to the hurricane deck No. 211,—a very good place indeed. Mr. Froom, my colleague, did it for me to-day.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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S. S. KAISARI-I-HIND

23rd April 1921

My dear Rukmini

Lakshmi was thinking of giving Savitri and you a change as soon as possible. Has the idea taken shape? What with the B.L. Exam., what with his new appointment, Sundaram won't be in a position to help much. Still I wish somehow the change was made. You both need it very much indeed. Perhaps your grandmother has returned home and Lakshmi is obliged now and then to fall back on Sangalam.<sup>8</sup> How good that lady is to us!

<sup>8</sup> This lady and her husband are very good friends of the Sastri family.

We have varied company here on board, about five hundred and thirty souls, men and women, children not counted. Of course we run against one another very often: nevertheless it is wonderful how you see some new people every day. There are a few Indians, among whom Parsis, Muhammadans and Hindus and Christians are represented. The waiters and stewards are mostly English, though the waiter who serves at our table is a particularly stupid Indian. My Secretary<sup>9</sup> is a plucky little man: every time the food is not to his liking or he fancies himself neglected, he trots off "to give a talk" to the purser or chief steward. Don't you, however, go away with the impression that he is a disagreeable or ill-mannered fellow. Very much the other way. He is very popular and really good-natured. He talks admirably both as to matter and form. He holds forth in French like a Frenchman; the Maharani certifies that his French is both correct and idiomatic.

We had some warm days, but yesterday after three hours of almost intolerable sultriness the weather changed suddenly in the evening and a pleasant cool breeze put everybody in good humour. Ladies and gentlemen are all in light silk or cotton and will be up to Port Said, which will be reached on Monday. Heavy warm dress will become a necessity thereafter.

There are three or four Tamil speaking Ayahs on board, and as many butlers. One of the Ayahs makes it a point to salute me with a *Kumbidu* and gives exercise to my vernacular.

Your loving father

V. S. SRINIVASAN

9 Mr (now Sir) G. S. Bajpai,

S. S. "KAISARI-HIND"

28th April 1921

My dear Rukmini,

Our voyage is nearing the end. The day after tomorrow a great part of the passengers will go ashore at Marseilles and take the overland route to London. I am one of these. A special Express train belonging to this P. & O. Company will wait on the pier at Marseilles, and we shall travel by it up to Boulogne, where we shall cross the Channel and arrive in London on Sunday night. I have cabled my arrival from Port Said: so I expect some one will wait for me from the Secretary of State.

We had a very beautiful view this morning. The ship passed through a narrow strait between Italy to the right and Sicily to the left. The Sicilian coast was superb, the Italian only slightly less charming. Lovely ranges of hills, in one place covered with snow, but all wooden and cultivated, sloped down to the water. Rivers could be seen winding their way, spanned here and there by bridges. All along the shore, for miles and miles you saw white structures, villages, churches, warehouses, quays. Vessels of various sizes were plying about; one or two so big that they carried whole trains, taking them bodily from one port and putting them down at another! There were two hill-towns opposite one another, Messina and Reggio, laid out on a large scale, tier upon tier, as though some angel-child had been playing with huge paper boxes, laying them alongside, at right angles, and in all possible ways, with or without intervals, producing different effects in different places, but always so as to give delight to the eye and food to the imagination. With the opera glasses (no intelligent passenger is without them) we were able

to see the trains passing to and fro, and the cranes at work in the jetties.

Where the sea was narrowest, the Italian coast consisted of a huge sheer rock called Scylla, famous in ancient story and appearing in the proverb "between Scylla and Charybdis".

The tedium of the voyage is relieved in many ingenious ways. Invention is taxed to the utmost, and there are seasoned passengers in every boat whose ingenuity has been greatly sharpened. The ship's officers assist. There are materials for all kinds of sport. Both children and elderly people enter the lists, and the competition for the prizes is very keen. The finals take place to-day. The animal spirits of these staid-looking, respectable, correctly-dressed people are amazing. When let loose, their claps and cheers and cries rend the air for miles around though there be none to hear. Dances and concerts and bets go on without any special arrangement, and with elaborate plans settled by a Committee of five persons, solemnly sitting day after day and fixing up details with great precision. Large sums change hands. Yesternight a grand fancy dress competition was got up. About one hundred ladies and gentlemen appeared in the most amazing and picturesque garbs. Divided into four groups for competition, they paraded three times in a circle, while the passengers were drawn up on either side making an avenue for the procession. Each passenger had a paper given to him on which he marked down for each group the number of the competitor to whom he would award the prize of that group. (Every competitor wore on the breast a certain label bearing his or her number.) Actually two prizes were given; the competition was so keen; the

counting of the votes took an hour and a half. The results were regarded as very satisfactory. Two of the first prizes went to people of my choice. The greatest favourite was a Mrs. Whittaker, who appeared as a sweeper-woman, broom, basket, apron, shoes—all perfect. But her merit lay in the way she actually swept, her gait, her talk, her smile. The way she would stop every now and then to wipe off the sweat from her face was natural. Some fellows made coarse jests, and she took them in good part and made clever repartees. Another girl was a great success as a newsboy. A gentleman solemnly paced round, in a white robe which encircled him ghostwise. On his back was the inscription "The Departed Spirit", just below it dangled a wine-bottle inverted. An easily understood joke, which got him the first prize. Another competitor who nearly hit the mark was Pussyfoot Johnson, with one eye (the other having been lost in the famous London rag). He walked pompously between the dining-tables, lectured people right and left, took the wine bottles and actually threw them out into the sea. He would have really done some damage had not his career been cut short by a shower of pieces of bread which rained thick on him from all parts of the saloon. You must have seen him come round in the end to our table of teetotallers and seriously compliment us on our virtue!

The notice board is generally full. Occasionally a gleam of humour is to be had even in this unpromising quarter. In order of dates the events of the competition etc. were given. When you come to the end, this is what meets your eye.

Friday 29

Packing

Saturday 30

AU REVOIR!

I understand this letter though posted at Marseilles, will just miss this week's mail boat and will find you only along with my first letter from London. Still I will post it at Marseilles so that you may see a French postage stamp.

Your affectionate father

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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CHEQUERS, SUNDAY

10th July 1921

My dear Rukmini

Having a little free time, I wish to atone for past neglect and send you a line or two of greeting. The Prime Ministers and the representatives of India came here yesterday with their wives (if they had them!) for the week-end, and will return to-morrow after breakfast. So I am here and writing on this paper.

It is a splendid mansion. You wouldn't suspect it from the outside. You would almost have passed it as an ugly brick building, some centuries old; perhaps used as a paddy store. It is old without doubt but a massive structure likely to last for several centuries yet. It has numerous halls and rooms and is in three stories. The paintings are very valuable, some going back to 1500 A.D., and the walls are full of them. The tapestries, and screens and carpets are priceless, while the curios, displayed on tables and on shelves and cupboards, are each worth a fortune and have their own history. What shall I say of the furniture? I can't say anything for I haven't the words.

Last night after dinner we were entertained by a cinema company and saw films not yet known to the public. One of them was a roll in which we all figured, I mean the Imperial Cabinet people, as we were going from our meeting place to the lawn for being photographed. The thing has come off well. Some day you may see it and exclaim "there is father!". To-day again we have been cinemaed. I have appeared in several illustrated papers here. Three photographers have taken me in various positions, and will give me copies of those I approve (for heavy prices, mind you!). I shall send these as soon as I get them.

Last week I had no letter except one from Lakshmi. Perhaps that was because the mail day was during Chachama's wedding, and you were too busy to write. I look forward in the next week to having full accounts of the happy event.

Your affectionate father

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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CARLTON HOTEL, PALL MALL, LONDON

27th July 1921

My dear Rukmini

Your letter came just now. I gather Savitri is not better, but as the doctor has not given up hope, you attempt to be hopeful also. God keep her! My anxiety does not help.

I am very busy to-day. But let Lakshmi have a word of love. Ask her to be brave for my sake. Thank heaven, she is much braver than I can be.

\* \* \* \* \*

From papers that I enclose Sundaram and Sankaran can piece out the story of yesterday's event.<sup>10</sup> It was a grand show. I received innumerable congratulations for my speeches.<sup>11</sup> Lady Lytton called me an artist (in speaking). 'There are only two or three men', said another, 'even in England who can equal you.' And so on. It was a personal triumph. I will write more of this next week.

Here is a postage stamp found in your letter. Lakshmi's envelopes are good. Give her my love and my constant good wishes.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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PARIS

25th August 1921

My dearest Rukmini

Your studies have gone far! Ingersoll is pretty tough meat, but I suppose it is good occasionally for the teeth to bite a dry bone!

Sundaram didn't write, for I have got nothing from him this week. I put some letters, etc. into this letter so that Ramaswami may come and ask you for them. I have sent him a lot, and this is lest it make him too proud.

<sup>10</sup> The occasion when the Freedom of the City of London was conferred on the Maharao of Cutch and Mr Sastri.

<sup>11</sup> Mr Sastri made two speeches, one at the Guildhall in reply to the presentation of Freedom, and another after luncheon at the Mansion House.



All I can do for Sankaran<sup>12</sup> to-day is to inscribe on the photo packet his address. The contents have cost me several pounds. I have signed a few of each sort to give away as the family Council should decide. With the lot that Subbaramier brought from Bombay we may oblige most friends and relations.

In announcing the Privy Councillorship to me, Mr Montagu said "that is the only honour which I should accept in this country." We have grown very much attached to each other. One day he confided to me many things about himself, his ambition, his part in the Punjab decisions and the story of his so-called attempt at the Viceregal throne. I felt it was too great an honour for me, and I went home, would you believe it? not full of pride or importance, but oppressed with the burden and fearful of some impending fall. This of course is mere superstition, the presentiment which mars the happiness of an overconscientious man when he fears that his acquisitions have overtaken and passed his deserts.

I have met some Indian girls who are here, I mean in London, for their education. They are all very clever and advanced. I have, through seeing them, begun to believe in India's womanhood. One of them is a Tiya girl from Cannanore, niece of C. Krishnan, Justice. Another is studying journalism, daughter of the Baroda Dewan. Then there is a Parsi prodigy, Miss Tata, already with distinctions, and looking forward to being the first Indian lady barrister. A Miss Desai of Bombay, very clever and very bold, is returning soon to India, was lunching with me the other day, and we then walked together in Kew gardens the while she told me all about herself. Another

12 Mr Sastri's son.

with whom I voyaged on the Kaiser-i-Hind has royal blood in her,—being niece of the Maharaja of Indore. She is at no pains to conceal her disapproval of her uncle, whose permission she did *not* take before coming away. In several ways she is the most daring and original mind of all these. She hasn't much education, poor thing. But her curiosity is very great and her reading wide. Her remarks on politics are rather of the facile extremistic type, but they show some independence of thought. She is now taking the waters somewhere here, being rich and fond of pleasure. We are rather attached to each other, and letters pass occasionally. She took me to task severely the other day for my moderate politics and possible governorship, but by next post followed another letter full of regret and asking for pardon, etc.! A spoiled child, I suppose, used to having her ways at home, but genuine and earnest withal, quick to see her own fault and not too proud to acknowledge it. One never asks for pardon unless one is by nature generous and forgiving. Good Indira, I like her very much indeed—I have been gossiping as if I were at home! when shall I be?

Yours very affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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GENEVA

14th September 1921

My dear Rukmini

This week I have written a long letter in Tamil to mother. It must be a welcome change to her if the nice things are in her letter and you all have to listen to her! I won't even mention their nature here, lest her joy become incomplete.

The election of judges to the International Court is taking place now. I have no vote, the Indian vote is cast by the leader of our delegation, Sir William Meyer. It is a long and complicated business, and will take up the day and to-morrow too. So I have a holiday. It chances luckily, for I have a pain in the side due to constipation; and Bajpai insists on my lying in bed. So I did till half an hour ago, when he left. Then I sat up and have been writing to mother and you. Of course I have forgotten the pain. It is somewhat like talking to you.

How often I fancy you sitting on the swing or round it; perhaps Ramaswami is there, and may be cousin Venkataraman. Occasionally the party will swell, and an adjournment to the fig tree become necessary. Why, T. R. V.<sup>13</sup> may have come to inquire whether the English mail has brought any news. But I forget: Savitri is ill and in her room upstairs. You won't be long away from her, and she would like to hear every bit. So my picture fills up rapidly and becomes vivid—until I see and hear all that goes on.

But alas!

\* \* \*

Will any one of you come to see me at Colombo on or about the 19th December? I will pay the travelling expenses!

Your ever loving father,

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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13 T. R. Venkatarama Sastri.

ON BOARD S. S. OLYMPIC

27th October 1921.

My dearest Rukmini

I remembered this morning I hadn't written you two weeks running. You don't feel hurt, do you? I love you as ever, child. Never mistake me.

This is a magnificent boat. It is a little town—upwards of 5,000 souls. You walk round one of the decks and you have covered a mile. And there are five decks. The first class passengers have a library, lounge, reading-room, smoking-room, swinging-room, croquet ground, etc. The furniture and lighting are of the first quality. My cabin is called a 'modern' room. Why, it is a commodious little house. Government pays for my six days' use of it—£315|- I am flabbergasted to think of it. Bajpai's cabin costs £140|- and is half mine. I have a bath, a lavatory and wardrobe all to myself. My military and civil advisers—share one cabin between them. They are nice chaps; else they would be green with envy and scowl and grumble all the time. As it is, Corbett swears he will get Krishnaswami Reddy to put a question about it in the Assembly.

Early this morning the boat began to rock just a little. The wooden walls creaked, and the noise appeared so like a man's when he walks stealthily in Venkata-subbiah's noisy shoes that I cried twice 'Who's there?' in alarm. Then I remembered that there was a switch within easy reach of my hand and turned the light on. It took me two minutes to assure myself there was no occasion for fear.

How good some of these people are! A missionary from America came to see me in London the other day, and

hearing I was going to his country for the first time, advised me to read a book called the "The Main Street" which would give me some idea of it. The next day he sent me a copy. I am now reading it. It is a novel; the first chapters are slow reading, the language is so full of Americanisms. I am used to it now and go faster.

It is colder than in London, and they say it will be much worse in America. So I am well armed with a thick enormously heavy overcoat, a rug, thick socks, jackets and drawers besides two warm scarfs to go round the neck. What frightens me is not the cold but the duration of the Conference<sup>14</sup> which is the subject of much speculation. Anything from two to six months! Six months is a big slice of what remains to me of life, and I grudge it, bitterly grudge it, even to the service of my country in what everybody calls here the biggest and most interesting capacity that an Indian has ever had. So it is. Before mighty nations, India is to be represented by an Indian, European officials of rank being only his advisers. And if these talks eventuate in any agreement or treaty I am to sign the instrument as plenipotentiary for India. It is a momentous step in her recognition as an international entity. Dominion Status for external purposes is fully secured by my deputation. If our people in India choose to scoff, make themselves unhappy, and bemoan their sad lot in other respects, let them. But this fact is there, notwithstanding.

I have used big words and discoursed on politics, which I ordinarily avoid in writing to you. But Sundaram and

14 The Limitation of Naval Armament Conference at Washington.

Sankaran will read this letter as well as you, and perhaps help you understand its meaning.

I have recently had to lay out a lot of money in clothes, and my purchases have let me in for much expense besides. My man servant, valet as he is called in England, has raised his demand, and I have to pay him £4 a week. He drinks, dresses quite respectably and carries himself rather like a gentleman. He also talks too much. Bajpai reassures me by saying he will have to go dry in America. Dunno! there is a lot of drinking still on the sly in the hotels there.

Yours very affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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S. S. NALDERA

13th March 1922

My dear Rukmini

To-morrow we reach Port Said. After that, 10 days still! A tedious voyage anyhow: thought of you makes it tenfold more tedious.

Looking back over the eleven months of exile, I occasionally accuse myself of callousness towards you all. But really I have always lived with you in my thoughts and plead not guilty!

In a few short weeks we must part again, and vast oceans will roll between us. Hard fate: but believe me it is high destiny as well. My progress will thereby be continued, my experience as public man rounded off. Do not listen to small counsels, near-sighted, wise-seeming grumbles. To

hear some people, travel would be impossible; they find it never opportune, they declare the present time critical from one year to another year, they see undeniable duties near at hand. Ever since I was at school, I have heard the expression, 'the present time is transitional and fraught with immense possibilities'. So it is, so it will be—for ever and evermore!

I own my desire to go abroad is selfish. It brings me new excitement, fresh knowledge, added vogue, enhanced importance. Are these mean ends? But the true answer is, my desire to go abroad is not wholly or even mainly selfish. I am committed to it in the proper course of public business. It is in the discharge of public duty. It is demanded by considerations of India's good. Honestly, I do not see, among the available men, any other who can be entrusted with the mission of educating opinion in the Dominions in our favour. And I maintain that this mission cannot be delayed. Its reaction, if rightly guided, on India's advance, is considerable. It can only be estimated by those who have imagination to see the subtle ways in which political action is controlled by the convergent currents of thought from different parts of the empire. The Washington Conference is a triumph of the world's public opinion. More and more every day in the future England's policy will be moulded by American and Dominion sentiment. If Lajpatrai says it, people call it wisdom; if I say it, they call it selfishness.

That the Government of India is behind this mission is its strength, its nature makes it indispensable. No one can treat with the Ministers and legislatures of the Dominions who has not the countenance of the Government of India. My having sustained a similar capacity

on three former occasions has given me a prestige which few others command and which would be exceedingly helpful in this present enterprise.

Why do I say all this? Because I know some of you are amenable to the censorious voices around and may see the wisdom as well as the safety of submission. I wish very much to carry your judgement with me. Not only will it upbear me in my tasks, it will enable you, when I am away, to bear the taunts of the foe with equanimity. Fear of public censure is not necessarily a failing. On the other hand our ancients have given it a high place among the virtues of our poor nature. But in times of grave discord, when the general verdict is confused and contradictory, and a mere majority, however overwhelming, carries no authority, it is best to base your reasoning on fundamentals, to fortify your conscience to the extent possible, on considerations of abstract right or wrong, and to test your action by the principles that have guided you throughout and commended themselves to the judgement of those who have been your habitual compatriots.

Your affectionate father

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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THE MAUNGANUI

8th July 1922

My dear Rukmini

The sea is very rough, it always is, they say, between Australia and New Zealand. It is difficult to write. Bajpai and Scully are actually sick. I am nearly so. It



is a queer feeling you have, extremely uncomfortable. All yesterday I lay in bed in the cabin, reading a novel by Anthony Hope. This morning I am dressed and on the upper deck in the big lounge,—the only person about!

I am tired of these frequent journeys and long to be back at home. That is my one great desire now. Yet they treated me very well indeed in Australia. Everywhere the best hotel, special carriages on the railways (either the Prince of Wales's or the Governor-General's); Ministers to escort and look after me; grand banquets and receptions; crowded meetings; giddy applause; photographs, interviews, autographs. Heaps of little presents have also come. The Indian community have given addresses, a gold watch and chain and a medallion of gold.

My visit has already borne fruit and will be crowned with success. That is certain. The Indians say they already feel several inches taller, while the whites declare their eyes have been opened. One day a handsome lady came smiling up to me in the dining-room. "Sir, May I ask the honour of shaking your hand?" I wondered and extended a ready hand. "I have got into trouble on your account" says she. I am duly grieved and inquire why. "I exclaimed in the company of several lady friends that you had more brains than all the Australians put together; the wives of some Ministers chid me for having lost my head." Another day the proprietress of a hotel put both her hands on my shoulder and whispered confidentially: "Everybody says you are the cleverest man that has ever been seen in Australia." The editor of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, one of the two most influential papers here, told me my visit had been an education to the people of Australia. A

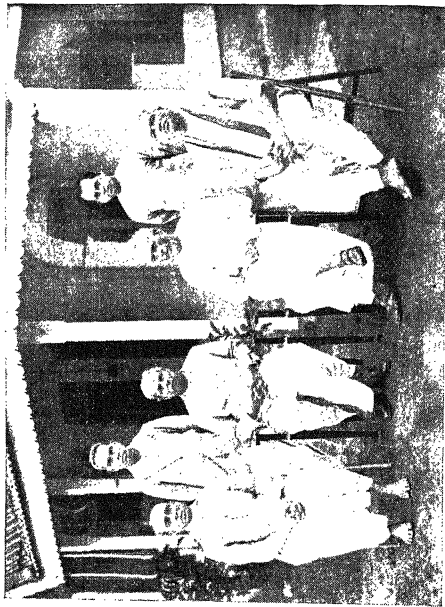
man named R. W. Hornabrook has been following me with the utmost admiration and love, has spent a lot of money, has seen, written to and quarrelled with, all sorts of people for me, and sworn eternal attachment and service. The official who accompanied me throughout Australia, a man named Smith, treated me with the greatest deference and his wife, poor girl, was crying at the quay when our boat pushed off. I could mention scores of such things. But you can imagine them. To say I was lionized is not to say too much.

Mr and Mrs Jinarajadasa have given me some issues of *New India*. I see some news in them of my doings here. *The Hindu*, *Justice* and *The Chronicle* are getting it hot every time they attack me. That is lively!

The Parliamentary dinner on the 27th June in Melbourne was the culmination of my activities in Australia. It was a roaring success. The ladies in the gallery were in raptures, especially Mrs. Hay, whom Lakshmi met on board the *Naldera* in Bombay. She has been very very good to me, and has given me a beautiful pencil with an opal set on top for luck and a boomerang with a sapphire. She is very fond of stones, and has superstitions about them. I wish I could get hold of her letters. She calls me Wisest of Wisdom! She has gone away to England and her parting from me was most tender. Kind friend! I had flowers, sweets, scents, something or other from her every day. Her husband, Major Hay, was disposed to be a little cross and stiff; perhaps a slight attack of jealousy, who knows! But he surrendered in the end and came to me the day after the dinner, shook me cordially by the hand and said, I had conquered everybody by my speech and he had heard no



*Standing:* Mr AND Mrs SANKARAN  
*Sitting:* Mrs SASTRI, SASTRIAR, RUKMINI,  
AND GRAND-CHILDREN



*Standing: V. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI, V. S. SANKARAN*

*Sitting: V. S. NARASIMHA SASTRI, SASTRIAR,  
T. R. V. SASTRI AND V. S. VASUDEVA SASTRI*

end of praise from all quarters, etc. I have given away three dozen photographs so far—nice ones taken in Sydney. Some of the letters I have received show an exquisite degree of sympathy, a tenderness of feeling and a delicacy of touch which are truly touching. Surely, not all people in the West are consumed with pride of race or arrogance of power! I will forward a few samples.

The Indians all over Australia are prosperous. Though illiterate, they speak broken English and somehow manage. Mostly they have married white women here, and are very fond and proud of their children. I hear the wives are faithful and loving. I saw several and was pleased. Some of the fellows have got a good deal of money, and live in comfortable houses with costly furniture, etc. Nobody has any complaint; hardships, sufferings and humiliations, etc. are the merest bunkum. The only two fellows out of employ are two very black cooks from our part of the country, who talk Tamil. I offered to take them back. But neither would come; they had some savings and could manage for a year! *In this land poverty is unknown.* Colour prejudice is singularly rare. Whenever the Indian community have entertained me, though they are humble people, they have gone and asked the Premier and Ministers and these have generally responded. Fancy! That is the spirit of Democracy.

Most affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

13th August 1922

My dear Rukmini

After a tedious voyage we came here yesterday about 4 p.m. It is a fine hotel, finely situated. The prospect is beautiful and the grounds are well laid out, the eye meeting lovely lawns and flowers.

I have just had morning coffee after my ablutions, which like a true Brahman I go through the first thing on leaving the bed. The arrangements in these good hotels are such that you don't need to shout for anybody, everything is provided and you are independent of waiters.

The sun shines bright and for the first time, if you omit the day in Suva, I sit in thin clothes and feel quite comfortable.

They keep two times in this town; one they call the Standard Time which this hotel observes in conformity with railways and shipping, and the other is the local time, the same as in Calcutta. The Standard Time is one hour behind. The sun rises early now and sets late. Judging by the light, I got up this morning at what I thought was proper time but I had to wait for an hour and a half for coffee. You know how coffee drinkers become impatient by delay in the opening ceremony of the day! The waiter said he came at the exact hour mentioned, 7-30. My watch showed 8-30 and when I showed it him he said with just a smile, "But that is local time, Sir, the hotel keeps S. T." Why, last evening we were asked to dine when the sun was still high above the horizon, 7-30. The theatre opened at 8-30 and it had not become dark when we took our seats.

We were met at the quay on arrival by Sir Joseph Pope, Under-Secretary for External Affairs, and by the Secretary of the Lieutenant-Governor of this province. He and the Prime Minister are both away and we have to wait till they return. It may be a week we have to stay here. A missionary named Macrae who worked for several years among our people in Trinidad (he calls them East Indians), called yesterday. He seems to know a lot, and I have requested him to come this morning and take me to the important Indians of the locality. To my surprise there are only 1,500 Indians in all in Canada, of whom about 1,200 are to be found in this province of British Columbia. I am told they are contented and prosperous and well thought of.

With love as ever

V. S. SRINIVASAN

*P.S.*—I forgot an interesting item. The hotel is only a distance of five minutes by motor from the quay, and we lost no time in leaving the boat. On entering my room I found a copy of the evening paper on the table. Here are the cuttings. One, you will see, describes my landing and settling down in the hotel as having taken place. The fact is, in the ordinary course our boat should have arrived by noon; but while we were still about 50 miles out two thick fogs encountered us, and the boat had actually to be anchored for several hours. The paper had put down everything as it was expected to happen. But the unexpected happened, and so I had arrived in Victoria while still far away!

We know some cases where people had been mourned, thanks to the enterprise of the press, days before they passed away.

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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CHATEAU LAKE LOUISE, LAKE LOUISE, ALBERTA

26th August 1922

My dear Rukmini

This is one of the loveliest spots in creation. My room opens on a beautiful little lake not twenty yards distant. On my side green lawns and flowers of various colours meet the eye. On the other sides the lake is bordered to the very edge by lofty hills. One of these hills is covered with snow right down to the middle, the white dazzling brilliantly in the bright sun. It being perpetual snow, a glacier has formed and in the course of ages has come down slowly till it almost meets the water. In fact a small streak seems to enter it. Though it is now mid-summer and it is hot elsewhere, here a most delightful breeze greets you.

The lake is a perfect emerald and it looks for all the world as if a green carpet had been spread without a wrinkle or fold.

From Vancouver all the way I passed through enchanting scenery. I could have wished to be a bird, flying all over the place; only some propitious god should have given me the gift of appreciation of nature.

Affectionately yours.

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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S. S. KAISAR-I-HIND

22nd April 1923

My dear Rukmini

I trust you are well and in good spirits. Don't muse too much. The secret is to be cheerful if not gay. Let Sundaram cable to me as soon as the event<sup>15</sup> happens. Don't forget.

A good voyage so far. The weather changed yesterday. I had to change silk for tweed this morning. We are to see Suez to-day at noon. I sit upstairs writing while the others are at breakfast below. I eat nothing but luncheon and dinner,—both for us vegetarians poor meals. We have complained often but the food doesn't improve. I suppose they do their best.

There is a great crowd on board. Life is not therefore insupportable, as it can be on these voyages sometimes. They have started the sports and competitions. The notice board announces a concert and fancy dress ball—both inevitable. Betting goes on incessantly and you tumble on bridge parties everywhere. There has been dancing twice so far. They invited me to lecture one day, but I declined. In fact I am apart. I talk to those who specially seek me out; and some do so. I have a book about me, but don't read much. I can't, for I am ever weary and fall asleep. Exercise is still too much for me, though I do some walking as a painful duty.

This one day with a barrister of Allahabad named Ross Alston. He is a wag.

15 The birth of a baby.

You don't eat meat? No.

You don't drink wine? No.

You don't smoke? No.

You don't bet? No.

You don't play bridge? No.

You don't dance? No.

You don't join the sports? No.

You don't flirt with the nice women? No.

Then why the devil don't you throw yourself overboard?

If I were younger, I should have profited by this robust philosophy. I am not such a misanthrope as all that. Yesterday I watched the kiddies at their sports for hours and was supremely happy. Some of the competitions were laughable, and the spectators enjoyed themselves hugely. I wish I could describe some of these to you. They might seem queer to read of: but you do not know how easy people are to please when they are idle and have time hanging on their hands.

With loving thoughts as always,

Your affectionate father

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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KENT HOUSE, 1, NOTTINGHAM PLACE W. A. 1

20th June 1923

My dear Rukmini

I am improving rapidly and shall get back to St. James' Court on Sunday next. This is Wednesday. But if all

goes well I intend to submit to an operation for piles. If I do so I shall come back to this place for three weeks: the people are so good.

The event has been delayed for nearly three weeks and I am extremely anxious. I look for a telegram every hour. When this reaches you, I trust you will be happy with the little one. Kiss it for me, will you?

I enclose a few clippings which may interest you and enable you to spend a half hour. Perhaps, however, with the new interest that will have come into your life, you won't have a minute any more which you will find heavy on your hands. Still for the sake of the baby and its instruction, do keep up your study and the continual improvement of your mind. There isn't much scope that I have provided, the more unhappy I am! but don't deprive yourself of what there is.

Friends have been sending me fruits and flowers and books and papers. But kind enquiries and good wishes merely sent up by medium of the nurse, the parties themselves going away—that is a proof of tenderness and consideration. A pious good soul came the other day—Bevan is his name, he stayed for twenty minutes at my insistence. He rose five different times, wouldn't talk of politics, tried jokes and pleasantries though they are foreign to his nature and left with many sweet wishes. I felt his love in the room for long after. One has much to be thankful for.

Your loving father

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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265, St. JAMES' COURT, BUCKINGHAM GATE, S.W.

18th July 1923

My dear Rukmini

The photos were taken in Glasgow, the two others are Jamnadas and Jinarajadasa. Two letters are in a funny hand: the signature is in itself a study, Mrs Hamilton Wright. Elizabeth is her Christian name. She is a terrible woman for controversy, I had a bad hour with her the other day. She is an opium enthusiast and, like many other moral cranks, fancies she has a charter from heaven for intolerance, imperviousness, and sanctimonious compassion for the erring souls who don't accept her dogmas. She says, when at Geneva in the second Assembly of the League of Nations, I abused my power of persuasion on the subject of opium and thereby incurred a grievous sin against humanity. Would I now atone for it by undoing the mischief? I left her praying devoutly for me—tired and angry with myself.

The printed cuttings from Canada will interest Ramaswami, unless some Bombay paper has already published them.

We had our first and last formal interview with the Colonial Office people yesterday. They wouldn't tell us anything. Mr Desai of Kenya lost his temper and said some nasty things. For a wonder they all listened quietly and answered gently. A great lesson in public behaviour which we have to master. The announcement of their decision will be made on the 25th instant. Our information is that it is adverse to us except on one point. I propose after that to undergo the piles operation and sail home about the end of August. I shall arrive in Bombay

about the 14th September. This is, however, just what occurs to me now. I haven't thought sufficiently of it to be definite:

Instead of coming on Monday your letter, rather Lakshmi's letter—there is no other this week, came to-day (Wednesday); and as I have full work to-morrow I write my reply to-day. To-morrow I am to speak to a group of M.P.s on the working of the reforms in India. It is an important occasion. Sir T. B. Sapru will attend and probably answer some questions that may be put.

My love to all—even to the baby. Does it smile yet? I wonder.

Your affectionate father

V. S. SRINIVASAN

## OTHER LETTERS

To Mr G. A. NATESAN

*Private*

S. I. HOME, POONA.

31st May 1907

My dear Natesan

Your letter. Though it must have caused you much bitterness and pain, I am relieved to find that you are in a good frame of mind. The end of the strain is not near as some fancy; and our party will have to pass through a struggle or two more.

At Madras in the meanwhile one must regret that Mr V. K. has added elements of bitterness.<sup>1</sup> The divorce of politics from schoolboy effort, however difficult, ought to be attempted. It is an imitation of western civilisation which is not suited to our people and which we can do well without. But the Kodaikanal pronouncement was in the nature of a bomb. The attribution of the trouble to the extremist party was not in the first place just; in the second place it was most imprudent and calculated to strengthen the hands of the official class. Mr Gokhale and others have all along contended that the unrest is *not*

1 See page 38. Mr Krishnaswami Aiyar's speech seems to have been badly reported. When Mr K. sent Mr Sastri his own summary, the latter confessed he put too much faith in the telegraphic summary (see page 40). It is interesting that Mr Sastri's forecast that succeeding generations will contribute more character, virility and persistence to the ranks of the extremist party has come true.

the result of forced boycott or violent preaching of Swaraj. Again, what need was there of that outrageous classification of Extremists?<sup>2</sup> Pal and Tilak may be bad people; students may form the bulk of the party: still, their camp is not without the elements of genuine patriotism and sacrifice. If it were otherwise, it would be the merest policy to avoid the temptation of calling the other party unpatriotic. As it happens they apply the same epithet to us. It is a sorry exchange of abuse. All the time sensible persons, not violently excited, will remember that the country belongs to all alike and that each has a right to serve her as he thinks best. Besides, I can't for the life of me understand why Mr V. K. attaches such undue importance to the one or two bits of reform that are contemplated. Let them come a few years hence, if not now. They are bound to come one day, anyhow. Reactions, setbacks, and serious mistakes are inevitable, in a huge, unorganized, heterogeneous mass. Firm adherence to our line of work does not mean violent warfare amongst ourselves. Personally too Mr V. K. has made his position a great deal worse than before. But to this, as to other personal aspects of the affair, he will be nobly indifferent. All the same it seems to me a wholly needless sacrifice.

Already Mr Pal is digging the grave of his own career. If there is truth in the telegrams published in all the papers, the poor fellow's mind is unhinged, and he is a pitiful wreck. His ignominious exit in this fashion may render pacification easy, though it is by no means certain. The

2 Mr K. was reported as having said that the extremist party was made up of (1) men consumed by their own ambition, (2) men disappointed in life, failures and (3) school-boys.

result will be facilitated by the increasing clearness of the failure of their propaganda. The utter futility of the boycott of Government work and association, the meagreness of constructive effort in the industrial and manufacturing line, and the total absence of cohesion exhibited by East Bengal happenings,—these and other weaknesses will open the eyes of the nation to the real nature of the extremist theory. For a time at least, though not in the immediate future, they will sink back. But depend on it, the party will continue to exist, and emerge into prominence every now and then. And my own honest opinion is that on every occasion the manifestation of their virulence will leave the forward movement in India outwardly discredited, but inwardly stronger and more firm based. At present the party's *personnel* is rather feeble and it has not risen equal to its own policy. But succeeding generations will contribute more character, virility, and persistence to the party; and though their hold on the country may never become very strong, impartial history will perhaps record that every onward step in our liberation was rendered possible by their seeming recklessness and bravado.

Let not schoolboy excesses and pranks incense us against that misguided but well-meaning party.

Mr Gokhale is at Mahabaleshwar and returns to-morrow night. He is going to be occupied with a memorial *re* Lala Lajpat Rai's deportation. Then he goes to Calcutta to obtain signatures, perhaps I shall visit Madras for the same purpose. Dravid goes to the C. P. and U. P. Mr G. will then proceed to Lahore for a week, thence to Simla and then after a day's interval, off to England where he expects to have to stay long—for eight months or there-



abouts. The Society of Servants of India will be left therefore largely to its own devices and that does not promise well at the start. However the country's call is loud and distinct and must be answered.

Yours affectionately  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO HIS BROTHER V. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY, POONA.

10th January 1915

My dear Ramaswami

Suddenly Mr Gokhale has changed his plan with regard to me and asked me to stay here for three days more so that I shall be able to leave on the 13th afternoon. This is due to some letters he has got from England by this mail which indicate a backward step as regards the Public Services Commission Report.

I am to return here for the study of the papers on the subject about the 28th of this month and stop till the 18th of February, missing the next sitting of the Madras Council at which no important business is to be brought forward. At present I am having a glimpse of the draft report.

I saw the Gandhis at Narottam's with the S. I. S. people and Gharpure. They gave us an hour of their time yesterday. Mr Gandhi in some ways, especially the modest downward face and the retiring speech, reminds me strongly of Mr A. Krishnaswami Aiyar,<sup>1</sup> (retired officer of the Police)—size and complexion too being similar. He

1 A retired police officer. A man of deep piety, he lived in Mylapore doing good deeds and recognised as the friend of all.

has one front tooth missing on the left side. Mrs Gandhi looks at least ten years older.—owing, I hear, to the jail hardships. She doesn't know English! Mr Gandhi, after a few family matters settled, will tour over India for the space of one year, observing and studying but not speaking or writing. If he drops his 'anarch' views and takes ours he joins the S. I. S. If not, he eschews politics and becomes an exclusively social worker. Queer food he eats: only fruits and nuts. No salt: milk, ghee, etc. being animal products, avoided religiously. No fire should be necessary in the making of the food, fire being unnatural. Only under Dr. Mehta's insistence he allowed, for a few days only, bananas to be boiled before eating them. He spoke highly of the Tamil passive resisters who stood out to the last and have suffered the most. In the second week of February he comes to Poona for a few days' stay. Of course I shall be here then.

The odd thing is he was dressed quite like a *bania*: no one could mark the slightest difference. He had a big sandal mark on the forehead and a kunkum dot besides. He did not stop with Mrs Bahadurjee because his caste people didn't like his being a Parsi's guest. His caste has two factions one of which will support him and the other not.

Yours very affectionately  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

P.S.—The Bombay Government would not allow a public procession or any other demonstration in Gandhi's honour. They say owing to the war situation.

V. S. S.

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TRIPLICANE

3rd May 1915

My dear Venkataramani

Your letter gives me praise which pleases, but cannot convert. I am happy where I am, as happy as it is possible in my nature to be. My moods of depression are very common; occasionally they are so deep as to bring suicide within sight. Literary effort is the thing I most dread, thanks to early training which exalted self-suppression and engendered a morbidly critical temper hardly distinguishable from cynicism. For literary work you need to feel that you are bursting with a message for the world, the worse for it if it won't hear! Even magazine articles and anniversary speeches tax me too much: few know the travail I suffer. The thanks at any rate are well deserved on such occasions. What matters it if the result be unsatisfactory? I have suffered enough.

The worst of the thing is, I am far from resigned to my state of barrenness. Like Circe's beasts I think constantly of the might-have-been.

I am happy young people now-a-days are reared under more cheerful auspices. Some at least of them will realise themselves. That in time you will be one of the select few and not the least distinguished is my wish and hope.

Yours sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASAN

To DEWAN BAHADUR L. A. GOVINDARAGHAVA AIYAR

SERVANTS OF INDIA SOCIETY, POONA CITY

23rd July 1918

My dear friend

I cannot write much. Time flies. We<sup>1</sup> are unarmed as yet. They are organised. To parley with them is to be defrauded of the little time we have. I know your way is like Malaviya's, not to decide till it is too late. See what they are doing elsewhere; Bengal, Bombay and U. P. are organising on our side. Your manifesto cannot prejudice the compromise. Let it come out, prompt, full, strong. That a compromise should be attempted at the Beach House<sup>2</sup> would be met with a laugh of mockery from hell itself. Please do not allow yourself to be misled and betrayed as you so often have been. God give you wisdom! I should not have dictated these few lines but a letter from Madras has made me disobey the doctor and strain myself.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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1 The Moderates who supported the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals for political reform.

2 The residence of Sir S. Subramania Aiyar.

POONA

23rd August 1918

My dear Venkataraman

I had taken the plunge<sup>1</sup> before I saw your telegram. Even otherwise I should have had no alternative.

My position in Madras and in consequence the Society must suffer now. Recovery may or may not be possible. Circumstances are inexorable.

I am conscious of the great anxiety that friends like you are feeling on my account. That I have such good friends, answering to the Kural's description 'coming involuntarily to assistance like the hand to other parts of the body' is a blessing for which I feel more thankful than I can tell. May I deserve to keep them! is my prayer.

L. A. G.<sup>2</sup> wrote to me in Calcutta, G. A. Natesan wired, Ramaswami and Venkatasubbiah wrote—I have not taken my course for lack of warning. Of course Ramachandra Rao<sup>3</sup> came down to Calcutta, half for my sake.

Like a *vicharamudha*, I have probably made a serious error of judgement. But I havn't given way to any petty impulse or sordid motive.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

1 The S. I. S. joined the newly-formed association of Moderates and supported the Montagu-Chelmsford proposals for political reform. This step was practically in opposition to the Indian National Congress.

2 The late L. A. Govindaraghava Aiyar.

3 The late Dewan Bahadur Sir Mocherla Ramachandra Rao.

To HIS BROTHER V. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

DELHI

25th February 1919

My dear Ramaswami

I had two hours with Mr Clauson<sup>1</sup> to-day. He has a very high opinion of Madras intelligence and says the Madras man is worth two of any other province. The Government of Madras is most reactionary and prevents his full development!

He fears the overpowering growth of Extremism: no party in England, not even Labour, will think of parting with power if it is to go into the hands of the Tilakites, and now Tilak has ruined himself. (Even Sir Sankaran Nair says if he (Tilak) wants to serve the country he must lie low). The biggest part of our task in England will be to reassure the average politician that those in whose hands power will be lodged—ministers, etc.—will be loyal to the British connexion and keep up British ideals. Our attitude towards the Rowlatt Bill is sure to be misrepresented and over-interpreted to our detriment. The Afghan trouble may wear a sinister significance in view of the Khalifate agitation of Indian Mohammedans. When we go to England the Peace Conference work will be at the thickest, and no one will pay us attention, though most persons will be polite. After all what is Montagu's position in the Ministry? Distrusted by the Asquithians whom he deserted, he is still hated by the Lloyd Georgians—who only tolerate him for the sake of the continuity of Indian policy. Any day they may throw him

1 Secretary and Legal Adviser to the Franchise Committee.

overboard, if it suits them. All this means we must be prepared for disappointment and adopt a most cautious course and avoid all cause of misconstruction or suspicion.

Lord Southborough<sup>2</sup> has told Couchman,<sup>3</sup> if he should venture to criticise the franchise report he won't allow the criticism to be printed. The subjects committee are going to discuss the report till 10 p.m. with a view to finishing, if possible. Anyhow the party from England are leaving by the mail train for Bombay on Thursday morning with the reports. The transfer list is considerable and not by any means disappointing, when one remembers how things stood at the start. Dr Sapru hopes to go to Allahabad by the midnight train to-day. Lord! how anxious he is to return!

Yours very affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr T. R. VENKATARAMA SASTRI

S. S. MANORA

23rd May 1919

My dear Venkataraman

In idleness, an introspective mind like mine often goes over old scenes. In most of my recollections you figure. I marvel how close you have come to me during the last few months. It is as though the old bud of our love had

2 Chairman of the Franchise Committee.

3 Official Member of the Committee.

after many years blossomed into a flower of rare beauty and fragrance. How I thank God for it!

I am given to the building of castles in the air. Do you know? In the fond palace of happiness that I build, you are an abiding inmate. I share my joys with you, take counsel with you in difficulties, and try to look after your interests.

I have travelled again in the villages of our early association in your company and we stayed supper one night in your sister's house. Then I learned all about Isvaran and Krishnamurti.<sup>1</sup> Why didn't I inquire about them at all in these last days? It seems an omission that must have struck you. And their sister and her very mischievous little boy! How have I forgotten them all?

We shall arrive to-morrow, and I will then telegraph my address. I do trust you will write and keep me informed. Otherwise I can't serve our cause efficiently.

The voyage has been tedious. When I return, I will take the mail boat of the week. But my day-dreams include America and Japan or in the alternative, South Africa, Australia, Fiji, Malaya and Ceylon. Perhaps my ill-luck will call me back in a hurry. Or I may not get the necessary money. Do you think it will be possible for friends in Madras to find me the funds for visiting all places where Indians are to be found in numbers and studying their conditions?

Yours lovingly

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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1 Nephews of Mr T. R. V. Sastri.



LONDON

5th June 1919

My dear Vaman Rao<sup>1</sup>

By general testimony this year's May has been exceptionally fine and dry in London. The weather changed two days ago. Yesterday there was slight rain and it became rather cold. Being a perfect stranger, I cannot say anything of the aspect of this place in a comparative sense. But it is difficult to a superficial observer to see that London has just been through the anxieties of a terrific war or that its people were till the other day in hourly dread of air-raids. The rush and roar of the world's metropolis goes on as ever. Even the threatened strike of the police, which might have paralysed the life of London, was scarcely felt as a danger. You must get into particular groups before you can find out how affairs move. And how many are these groups? India and her trouble vex only a very few persons. It is amusing how an Englishman tells you of his countrymen's complete ignorance of India with almost the pride that attaches to a confession of an amiable weakness. We wish to deal fairly and justly with India, so seems the general attitude, but we don't know anything; do tell us something. But before you have opened the subject, your knowledge-seeking friend seems tired, says 'how interesting!' and turns to another region of thought where his mind has a surer foothold. Generally speaking, I have been able to gather that, among the people that are interested in Indian

1 A member of the S. I. S., now no more.

affairs, the recent disturbances in the Punjab and elsewhere have not retarded, but accelerated, the cause of constitutional reform. Most men have not taken the impression that India is in mutiny, but that it is desirable to push on with the Bill as fast as possible.

The papers do not contain any criticisms or illuminating comments on the provisions of the measure to be debated by the Commons this afternoon. As far as one can say now, there will not be any serious opposition to it. The second reading will go smooth, and the resolution for the constitution of a Joint Committee will be adopted almost *nem con.* The Lords will consider the measure only after the Whitsuntide recess, but even in that House much difficulty is not anticipated. Thanks to the courageous and patriotic stand taken by the Maharaja of Bikaner and Lord Sinha, which one could wish was more generously appreciated in India than it is, the propaganda of Lord Sydenham<sup>1</sup> and party, though envenomed and ceaseless, does not carry far. Still it is well to be prepared for bad weather in that quarter. Friends are aware of the need. The other day I was one of the guests at a small dinner in the House of Commons. As it was private, I shall not disclose particulars. But there is no harm in your knowing that the party consisted of members of various shades of opinion, and that every one of them spoke. General support of the Bill was the burden of every speech. Of course the rules to be hereafter made are to settle the scope of the reforms. The Bill merely provides the framework. The Joint Committee will go thoroughly into the Bill and the rules as well. I hear that both

1 Former Governor of Bombay.

Mr Montagu and Lord Sinha will have seats on the Committee. Much depends on the personality of the Chairman. Still one may hope that the parliamentary skill of the one combined with the sureness of grasp of the other will convert the Committee into a firm ally of India.

The future of the British Congress Committee and of the paper "India" is still doubtful. Like the deputations from India, the Committee seem to have an inner division. The Congress deputation have begun to carry out their aims and make their views known to the Committee. I am more than ever convinced of the imperative need of keeping up a vigorous organization here for our propaganda. Not certainly to the neglect of work in India—which of course is paramount. But let us not forget that without corresponding activity in London our work there cannot bear full fruit. Sir Binod Mitter and Sir Krishna Gupta have arrived; their advice and assistance will be of invaluable use in our mission. Our party have to be augmented by Messrs Surendra Nath, Prithwis Chunder Roy and the Rev. Mr Nag. After them are expected Messrs Chintamani and Mocherla Ramaachandra Rao—though we have not yet heard here of their starting. Dr Sapru is expected in the first week of September.

I have heard it said that a Commission will be appointed to investigate the disturbances in the Punjab and elsewhere, and that its terms of reference will not exclude the methods adopted in the interests of tranquillity. The probability is that the President will be chosen from among prominent men in England. Another rumour I will set down for what it is worth. Sir Ibrahim Rahimtoollah will be Sir Sankaran Nair's successor and Sir Chimanlal

Setalvad will be the next executive councillor of Bombay. Both appointments would be excellent.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

To Mr A. V. PATWARDHAN

LONDON

26th June 1919

My dear Vaman Rao

The exciting events which are embarrassing the Peace Conference and the general industrial and economic unrest of which there take place many striking manifestations even in England, have driven the Indian question away from that foothold on public attention which the debate on the second reading of the Government of India Bill seemed for a time to have secured for it. The India Office, the Indian deputations, and the guardians of vested interests seem the only people whose minds are busy with the affairs of India. A few thoughtful publicists in each party are of course keenly interested in the events that influence the condition of India. The *Daily Herald*, the popular organ of Labour, has been publishing a series of short and telling articles from the pen of Mrs Besant. Mr Banerjee was interviewed by the *Observer* the other day; the *Oxford Outlook* contains an article by a young Madras scholar of promise, Mr P. P. Subramanya Sastri,<sup>1</sup> on the Indian Reforms. In the same magazine Prof Gilbert

1 Now Professor of Sanskrit, Presidency College, Madras.

Murray, one of the world's most renowned scholars, and a genuine friend of India, makes a reference to her case which indicates his earnest liberalism in politics. 'In the problems of the Empire,' he asks, 'do we believe that the disaffection of Ireland and the unrest of India are ultimately to be settled by the removal of grievances and extension of self-government, or do we contentedly accept the motto that "what we took by the sword we must hold by the sword"?''

Two meetings of importance were held during the week in the National Liberal Club of interest to the people of India. The first was a big tea organized by the London Indian Association, to which most Indians and the members of a progressive society called "Great Britain and India" were asked. No political speeches were expected. In fact the President, a young doctor named Atal, began by saying so, but he could not restrain his feeling when he alluded to the stern measures of the Punjab Government. He then called on Mr Tilak, who also alluded to the same topic and then expressed a hope that the various Indian deputations might act together, adding that in that case he would undertake to cable to the All-India Congress Committee and obtain a relaxation of the 'mandate' by which the Delhi Congress had bound its delegates. Mr. Patel<sup>2</sup> thought it necessary to correct the impression produced by this definite wish for a compromise on the part of a great nationalist leader and, in the guise of warding off any misapprehension by the audience of Mr Tilak's real purpose, laid down five essentials in the mission of the Congress, in respect of which it was not

2 V. J. Patel, afterwards famous as President of the Indian Legislative Assembly, brother of Sardar Patel.

possible for its spokesmen to compromise with anybody. If he had left any particle of Mr Tilak's idea to remain, it was neatly exploded by Mr Horniman,<sup>3</sup> who rose later and, expressly dissociating himself from Mr Tilak, asserted that the Congress deputation was the only body that could speak in the name of the people of India and had a title to be heard and then solemnly adjured Messrs Banerjee and Sastri to remember that fact. Mrs Besant made the speech of the evening. She was occasionally interrupted, but skilfully got a hold over the audience, and while not abating a jot of India's ultimate demand or discounting her fitness for Home Rule, counselled caution to the young and energy to the old, urged the need of recognizing solid facts and drove home the expediency of supporting Mr Montagu's Bill while endeavouring to liberalise it. The speech indicated her extraordinary mastery over the feelings of hearers and her power to triumph even over a hostile atmosphere. The bitter chord was again struck by Mr Satyamurti, who referred to the renunciation of knighthood first by Dr Subramania Aiyar and then by Mr Rabindranath Tagore and to Sir Sankaran Nair's resignation of office as proofs of the intolerable wrongs of India, and wound up with a grim allusion to Ireland and a warning to the effect that, if India were not freed of fetters by England, 'God help England and India!' But the most pessimistic speech of all was that of Mr Dube,<sup>4</sup> who held forth in a shrill key for upwards of half an hour, and indulged in unbalanced and extravagant observations which occasionally reminded one of Max Nordau.

3 B. J. Horniman, editor, "Bombay Chronicle".

4 An Indian barrister then practising before the Privy Council.

The other meeting was held on Tuesday night the 24th instant, with Mr H. E. A. Cotton<sup>5</sup> in the chair, who made a graceful reference to his father and acknowledged a hereditary zeal for the progress of India. Mr Charles Roberts,<sup>6</sup> who at short notice took Mr Montagu's place as chief speaker, spoke for about an hour to an appreciative and enthusiastic audience, expounding dyarchy, the non-brahman difficulty and other things familiar to us all. Mr Surendranath Banerjee was loudly applauded throughout his speech, he touched the right chords with the cunning of the master. I pleaded during five brief minutes for the best Parliamentary talent being made available for the office of Governor in India, as the Indian Civil Service could not be trusted, whatever the Government of India might say, to throw up in the ordinary course men of the requisite toleration and statesmanship. Sir Abbas Ali, ex-member of the India Council, made a good point when he deprecated the inferior status accorded to the Minister in the Government of India's scheme in comparison with that of the Executive Councillor. Mr Samarth thanked Mr Roberts and improved the occasion by emphasizing in a few apt sentences the lessons of political wisdom that the audience had already received with appreciation. Altogether the meeting made a useful contribution to the cause dear to our hearts, and I hope it is no mere partisanship which makes me feel that its contribution was infinitely more helpful at this time than that made by the meeting under the auspices of the London Indian Association.

5 Son of Sir Henry Cotton and afterwards President of the Bengal Legislative Council.

6 Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for India.

As I write the names of the Joint Committee are not announced. But we shall keep in touch, you may rest assured, with all members likely to be helpful. I have seen some already. In a day or two I shall issue to selected people a criticism of the Bill that I have drawn up, together with reprints of certain articles in the *Servant of India*. Sir Michael Sadler<sup>7</sup> has invited me to address the Leeds Luncheon Club on Monday next on the Indian 'Reforms' question, and next day I shall speak on the subject to a public meeting in the same place organized by some friends of India belonging to the local theosophical lodge.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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7 Sir Michael Sadler wrote the following letter to Mr K. C. Roy:

THE UNIVERSITY, LEEDS

2nd July 1919

My dear Mr Roy

Mr Sastri was happily able to stay with us here for three days—Sunday to Wednesday. His visit—for which we are indebted to your good offices—has done immeasurable good in Leeds. I have no hesitation in saying that his addresses have won the respectful and cordial sympathy and support of the leading citizens—men and women. But far more even than his spoken words, his personality has charmed and impressed those who have had the privilege of meeting him. And they are many and (in these parts) influential.

He had an evening with our chief newspaper editors,—Unionist, Liberal and Labour.



DELHI

13th April 1920

Dear friend

I trust you have come back the fresher and wiser for your travel. Let me felicitate you first on the apology you received from your European assailant, and next on the warning you have issued to the public against the non-co-operation resolution of Mr Gandhi. I feel sure the latter (the resolution, I mean) won't be acted on except by a very few. But it will lead to much misunderstanding, and there may be a little trouble if the Mohammedan *Khansamas* in the employ of Europeans take up the cry. Mr Gandhi advocates it, I know.

At the Luncheon Club his reception was brilliant, and the applause at the conclusion of his address significantly enthusiastic and prolonged.

He met and addressed the chief women workers of the city; saw our leading people at the University; called with me on Lord Faber and Sir Rupert Beckett at the Bank; met the Vicar and Lord Mayor of Leeds; took part, at the Lord Mayor's invitation, in the civic procession through the streets of the city, and addressed a large audience at the Theosophical Hall on 'Modern India' with special reference to the Reforms.

My wife and I are very happy to feel that we have made his acquaintance and shall always feel linked to him by ties of friendship.

Believe me, Yours very sincerely

M. E. SADLER

When I am gloomy, I fear the Khilafat movement is going to land us in disaster. I picture the Mohammedans breaking out here and there in futile mob-demonstrations. Hindus will foolishly join. When the punishments come, the latter will fare the worst for they haven't the provocation of the others. And the Secretary of State for India or at least the European community may use the affair as a consideration for the postponement of the reform scheme. Is this a piling up of pessimistic fears?

I much misgive your zeal for party-elections just now. You will not accuse me of any partiality for beach oratory. Nor is there any risk of your attributing the motive of popularity hunting. Let me merely mention some of the steps in my line of reasoning. You don't need more, if you need so much.

The party system, i.e., two large parties dividing the politicians, leaders and rank and file alike and also a section of the electors, are necessary for parliamentary government. But they are not now in being and will take years to evolve. They may not evolve at all, and we may be doomed to the unsatisfactory group system, the groups too being on communal and caste lines.

We cannot force them into existence, for there are no big issues that have come into prominence and await settlement in the first Council. The first year will throw up some such, and the divisions they evoke will not by any means correspond to the division between moderates and extremists.

We may now fix on some issues and indicate our views on them. But they are likely to be the same as the other party's issues, and where they differ, won't be so catching.

The present distinction arose or was defined on a clear-cut concrete issue, the support or refusal of the reform scheme. That issue is no longer present.

No doubt temperament was at the bottom of this division and everyone has his temperament, even if you knew yours, and ask the voters to prefer you because you don't go so far as the other chap!

Vehemence of advocacy or unrestrained language is no proof of immoderation in political aims. Mr Gandhi is as gentle in argument and as fair to opponents as you could wish but look at his aims! Chintamani is a moderate of the true brand; but he is next only to Samarth in our camp for intolerant methods of controversy.

Party elections necessarily mean party proceedings and relentless opposition to ministers in Councils. This does no harm where they can count on party discipline and mechanical majorities. Could any ministers chosen after party elections count on majorities? If bitterly opposed how could they show good results? The first step in responsible government must prove a success. Without party feuds and quarrels, (omitting ambitious and factious individuals) the general attitude may be conducive to harmony and co-operation.

A great political upheaval generally leads to a revision of parties. It is nothing strange or humiliating. Look at the present struggle in England for a recasting. The inauguration of the great Act of 1919 requires a fusion of the best and most useful elements in all ranks.

If we leave out the great names that have hopelessly committed themselves, many extremists are genuinely desirous to work the Act. These have not avowed their conversion and will not, for reasons of pride, etc. But

we know they are there in numbers. Pandit Malaviya is in all probability one of these for whom a bridge of gold may well be made.

Many who disapprove of the Amritsar resolution will fight against it from within the Congress, but will shrink from calling themselves anti-Congressmen. The Congress has a hold (not I fear fully realised by you) on the minds of thousands of educated men, and they regard an open breach as high treason. This may not be the case for long; but it is so now, and we can't afford to campaign for immediate success on plans which may be suitable in future.

Sholapur, Midnapur, and the Satyamurthi Midlothian all show that the extremists are resolved to use against us for all that it is worth our dissent from the Congress resolution on the Act. We can't and won't recant that dissent; but let us not be forced out of the Congress and by our own action or statement render ourselves liable to be represented as enemies of the Congress.

I am all for moderate organs and liberal leagues. But they are to be for propaganda, not for conduct of elections or undermining Congress.

The basis of the Liberal party must be widened. Samarth will impose stringent tests and gradually restrict membership. A proselytising religion can't afford to examine with meticulous care the antecedents of its converts. If our minority is to become a majority, we must not be heard to cry repeatedly: 'How can we work with such folk?'. 'We shall lose caste with Government.'

Yours very sincerely  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To HIS SON V. S. SANKARAN

LONDON

July 1921

My dear Sankaran

The Indian Mail is come, but owing to my change of address, it is a day late for me. So it happens I write without a knowledge of the latest news. I enclose some paper cuttings of interest.

I am not able to go to Oxford, as our Cabinet<sup>1</sup> sits daily and discusses matters of great moment. I dined at Buckingham Palace the other day and talked to the

1 Mr Sastri represented India at the Imperial Conference of 1921. A London letter of the time speaks of his part in the conference in the following terms:—'Mr Sastri's colleagues and friends, and—sacrilege though the suggestion may sound in the ears of some super-patriots—fellow-countrymen in general may rejoice at the manner in which he has imposed a dignified and public-spirited personality upon the members of the Imperial Conference. Though, technically, he is representing the Government of India, he is doing a great deal more. He speaks boldly and courageously, yet with a fine and supple courtesy, on behalf of his country as an Indian imbued with a most ardent patriotism. One of his colleagues at the conference (Sir Thomas Smart) has, I am told, dubbed him 'The Empire's silver-tongued orator'. It will be no news to those who have delighted in his splendid eloquence and excellent choice of language and variety of inflection. But, though compliments come his way as a matter of course, they do not disturb his serenity and equanimity any more than the vituperation with which his name is received by some sections of his political opponents as a fitting punishment for a public worker who has sacrificed everything that ordinary men find of value in life. It is a stimulating sight to observe Mr Sastri pursuing a calm and sure

Queen though not to the King. The Lord Chancellor<sup>2</sup> went into raptures over my speech and observed that I should be making a huge fortune if I had joined the bar. He was struck in particular by something in my voice and manner which at once rivet attention. On the 1st of July the Canadians here celebrated Dominion Day and all of a sudden the Maha Rao of Cutch transferred his part to me of responding to the toast of guests. Somehow I was in very good form and brought the House down several times. They gave me a tremendous ovation and said no end of good things. At the Guildhall luncheon in honour of the King and Queen of Belgium, the Duke of Connaught introduced me to his sister and niece as a

way in the midst of difficulties that are often increased by the weakness of distinguished compatriots who ought to know better. . . . . At the conference, he created a sensation in all quarters by the energetic and firm exposition that he delivered of the views of India on the question of the Imperial Citizenship and the status and disabilities of Indian communities overseas.'

2 Lord Birkenhead. A London letter refers to the occasion when the Lord Chancellor paid a big compliment to Mr Sastri: 'Mr Sastri had a very fine reception at the Empire Parliamentary Dinner the other night. His speech at the conclusion of the proceedings in response to the toast of India was received with acclamation, and was generously applauded by the Lord Chancellor, who presided. *The Evening Standard* comments that 'by common consent' Mr Sastri's speech was the best of the evening. When he rose to speak, everyone, guest and host alike, rose to pay him courtesy. Perhaps out of these little things more results ensue than out of greater and more formal occasions.' The Lord Chancellor said that he had come from a far distance for the function but that he felt sufficiently rewarded by the Indian Member's speech.

wonderful speaker, and said I made fun of him, but he enjoyed it hugely. And then he made me repeat the joke to them. Of course, they laughed rather uproariously. I give it in a separate sheet.\*\*

The Cabinet proceedings are kept secret. The Prime Minister and others were very angry when the *Times* published accounts of what was said. Somebody has betrayed the Cabinet. Inquiry is afoot, and I have no doubt one or two men will be sacked. It is full of interest. The British Cabinet is far and away the ablest governing body in the world.—Balfour, Curzon, Churchill, Lloyd George—where are their equals? Smuts comes near and is greatly respected. But he lacks their knowledge and width of outlook and is now in sharp antithesis to their policy. Hughes<sup>3</sup> is an able, downright chap, very deaf and full of mannerism, but dogged and full of fight. Meighen of Canada is a quiet, shrewd lawyer who has his own views and sticks to them. He is not an impressive or forceful speaker, but has character and steadiness of

\*\*\* "When Your Royal Highness came to inaugurate our new Legislatures a few months ago, you spoke such gentle, soothing balmy words that we forgot our sorrows and smiled through our tears. You won our hearts. More. We thought we had a monopoly of your love. But when I heard the things that have been said here to-day and discovered how you have not forgotten Canada nor Canada you, I confess my feelings were not altogether happy. It is not proper, I know, to use the language of a species of court to which we are accustomed in the morning papers. But I cannot help saying, if Your Royal Highness will forgive me, India feels deceived and betrayed. But gentlemen, there need be no unbecoming jealousy, no unhealthy rivalry in the possession of the Royal House of Windsor, etc., etc."

3 Of Australia.

purpose. He is a great friend and admirer of mine. I am to take out his wife to the theatre one night, as he doesn't care for that sort of thing. Massey<sup>4</sup> is a huge unlovely figure, rather simple-minded and straight, but has great experience of practical administration. He is rather fond of speaking, though he is not good at it. There are a few honest ideas that have obtained lodgement in his mind, and as they are imperialistic, they show off well and bear repetition. He is endless on them. Curzon's diction and balance are amazing even in ordinary table talk. He grips you at once by his power. Having no love of him or his politics, I own I felt flattered when he noticed me of his own accord and said nice things of Gokhale. Churchill, of course, is brilliant. His performance is not so even as Curzon's, but every now and then he throws out sparks which come from real genius and not merely please, but open out spacious and large aspects of the subject. No wonder he is indispensable, though erratic and unstable. He and his wife are popular at social functions. He and Lord Curzon have beautiful and charming wives, but their success is their own. Balfour is a class by himself. Somehow he fascinates me. He talks little and seems occasionally to sleep. When he opens his lips it is worth anybody's while to listen. I confess he has not added to my knowledge, but I am struck by the detachment and serenity of his judgement as well as by the scholarly pose which fits him so eminently. Montagu admonished me 'not to go near him', but I insisted I could take care of myself and he must get me an appointment. So when I lunched at his place with his famous sister, and some other members of the great Cecil

4 Of New Zealand.



family specially invited in my honour, I felt I had been privileged with the society of one of the world's great men. We did not talk a word of Indian politics.

Last Sunday, by accident I had the good fortune of meeting a great man of quite a different sort with whom I conversed freely and naturally and enjoyably. Giving up other attractions, I had gone to the Shakespeare Hut (at Y. M. C. A.), a place of great usefulness to Indian students, to hear Lord Haldane on University Ideals. He talked of Einstein and relativity, and nobody understood him but several nodded. I fear I was of the latter. At the end of the meeting, I went up claiming the 1919 acquaintance. He didn't seem to remember, but picked up quickly like Dr Miller and became communicative. He had no car and set out on foot. I offered him a seat in mine and for once learned that a car could be something more than a luxury. I asked him for an appointment, and while we were both fumbling at our engagement books, a bright idea struck him. 'Why not now?' he exclaimed. So I had a delightful half hour. Calm, human, persuasive, benevolent, yet shrewd and practical-minded. Not noisily appreciative of a joke and not above perpetrating one himself, phenomenally quick to take your point and carry it many stages ahead, he seemed a giant in wisdom and character and reminded me strongly of Ranade, purged of his oddities and slow self-centredness of manner. He poured balm on my heart when he declared his faith in a British Empire Citizenship and agreed it *was* a deduction from it to allow Dominions to pass restrictive immigration laws. He (and Lord Southborough in this matter) was sure that Smuts<sup>5</sup> could not

5 'At this Imperial Conference, in 1921, he came into conflict

accept our resolution<sup>6</sup> and keep his position in South Africa for a week. I should be unwise to bring about his fall, for Indians would fare infinitely worse in his political rival's regime. 'Try the Prime Minister' he advised me finally. 'He is the only man in England who could get Smuts to do anything.' Then he talked of the great need of two Hindu judges on the Judicial Committee. Work was getting very heavy and difficult. He would gradually put them to crown colony cases, then to New Zealand, Australia, Canada and last of all South Africa. (And he lifted a warning finger at me.) Then he told a story of how he had once proposed to Sir Wilfred Laurier that Canadian cases should be heard by Australian judges. That great statesman promptly protested: "We can stand any number of Englishmen, but these upstart Australians never!"

I must now stop. It is very late.

Yours very affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

with General Smuts, the Prime Minister of South Africa. A great amount of heat was engendered; for Sastri's position in demanding equal citizenship for Indians domiciled in the dominions was quite unassailable; and General Smuts's argument, that for economic reasons this could not be granted rang hollow. Everyone present knew perfectly well that the 'colour bar' lay behind it.' (C. F. Andrews in his biography of Sastriar in "Great Men of India", The Home Library Club 1939).

6 The Imperial Conference of 1921 adopted the resolution: 'This Conference . . . recognised that there is incongruity between the position of India as an equal member of the Empire and the existence of disabilities upon British Indians lawfully domiciled in some other parts of the Empire, and this Conference is, therefore, of opinion that in the interests of solidarity of the Commonwealth it is desirable that the rights of such Indians to citizenship should be recognised.'

*Enclosure*

From VICEROY To SECRETARY OF STATE

4th July

Private and Personal

From telegraphic reports received in this country Sastri seems to have been doing splendidly. If you agree give him my congratulations, and tell I am following his activities and speeches with great interest.

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To HIS SON V. S. SANKARAN

CHEQUERS

10th July 1921

My dear Sankaran

It is after lunch now, and we have been photographed by enterprising cinema people. There is no safety for great people even in a country seat! All have retired to their rooms; it is so hot. Why, I thought this morning as I was returning from a long walk I might have been in one of the exposed parts of Ooty on a hot May day. It is lovely country all round, hilly, well-wooded, rich in historical interest. Burke had a seat about 6 miles from here, and is buried in the local churchyard. Beaconsfield sleeps near about, and the famous William Penn, whom Dr Nicholas Murray Butler, who is of the party, speaks of admiringly. A neighbouring village has the glory of owning Milton. Down below this house, about a mile and half away, is the little church—a pretty place it is—where Hampden collected his parishioners and harangued them on the iniquity of shipmoney—his share was 13s 6d., as the document, still preserved, shows.

In this house there once lived the daughter of Cromwell, and they recently discovered a cast of the Protector, hidden within a wall, huge nose, vest and all. A letter of his written on the field of Marston is on view. Stoke Pogis, where Gray wrote his *Elegy*, is about half an hour by motor. I didn't realise before why he wrote, as examples of unrealised greatness, of a village Hampden, a mute Milton and a guiltless Cromwell. The nation owns this fine house now, a gift by Lord Lee of Fareham, used by the Prime Minister when in office as his week-end residence. No one in India understands the need of a frequent holiday to men whose brains are continually occupied with problems of anxiety. Lloyd George is made of iron, else he would have gone to pieces long ago. Last week he conferred with the coal people and settled the strike. Next week he is to confer with De Valera and may settle the Irish question. Meantime he has been sitting with us continually and discussing world affairs. Now and again he rushes to the House to answer questions and be bullied by Lord Cecil or some big man of that sort, and make a great speech. Interviews and despatches, correspondence of sorts, and dinners and luncheons, talks to the King, etc.—any one of these things by itself is enough to overwhelm one of our men. Here he is, laughing and jesting and enjoying keenly every one of Dr Butler's anecdotes, which seem to be inexhaustible, putting in a story of his own now and then, kissing his daughter and making sundry enquiries of his guests, while between the pauses one of his secretaries,—there are four of them kept tight at work,—comes showing urgent telegrams and drafts and taking orders. They are all famous men, C.M.G.'s and K.C.V.O.'s and what not. The

*Sunday Times* this morning has short biographies of three of them as men who made the peace at Paris. A fourth is son of one of our former D.P.I.'s, Sir Edward Grigg, born in Ooty. He loves India, and befriends me. The senior secretary, right hand man of his chief and his conscience-keeper, Sir Maurice Hankey, courted by Cabinet Ministers, looks for all the world as if he were just twenty-five, smiling, affable, and without a care on his smooth brow. He is lost in admiration of my English and says he envies my faculty of getting the right word in the right place. Where did I learn English? Who taught me? And so on. He just now said my speech on Friday in moving the resolution on the status of Indians, was most eloquent. Hughes called it great. Meighen pronounced it a moving plea. Balfour declared it very brilliant. The Prime Minister came up in the afternoon to where I stood and said, 'It was a fine speech, careful and guarded, therefore the more effective.' Montagu says he looks for happy results. At dinner last night, Mrs Hughes looked at me and observed to the P.M., 'That is a very good face.' He added, 'Yes, he is a fine speaker.' Not meant for me; I looked away and bent down earnestly to say something to Mrs Massey, who sat next to me. 'Did you observe,' he asked, 'the by-play that was going on all the time you were speaking and the notes that went amongst us?' 'No,' I said, (not altogether truthfully, for Montagu had told me confidentially) and Dr Butler was curious to know what it was. Then the P.M. said my speech gladdened the hearts of the British Cabinet Ministers, for I arraigned General Smuts, who used on every occasion to preach the Sermon on the Mount with a sanctimonious air. They were very sore about it, and told each other:

“ Serve him right. Where is his justice now and equality and tenderness to oppressed nationalities? ” Hughes remarked that he was very angry with Lloyd George for postponing the discussion, for he was eager to declare on my side and down Smuts. Polak, who read the confidential verbatim report of my speech, calls it ‘ magnificent.’ For the moment it looks as though the prospect was bright. Let us see.

Has Reuter wired the news that the Corporation of London have resolved to confer on Maharao and me the Freedom of the City? It is due to Montagu, who wrote an eulogistic letter about me unofficially and recommended the step.

Your loving father  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

My dear Sundaram

Read this letter in continuation of Sankaran's. Last night the P.M. led us after dinner to a site on a hill which was the Roman camp, wherefrom of old they overthrew Caractacus the Breton warrior. He was taken prisoner and carried to Rome to grace the triumph of Claudius. His fortification, rather primitive of course, stood on a small plateau below, which is now cultivated. But the trench is visible which marks where an old moat must have been. It appears Marshal Foch inspected the spot and remarked that it had been so well chosen that he would be able to hold it with a few machine guns against the entire German army, as it was.

On the Roman site there is an oblong space covering a grave, which has been prepared for the proprietor of the house, Lord Lee (first Sea Lord, who wished to be buried

there). That is the only reservation he made before making over the property to the nation.

Along with some relics of Cromwell I saw a ring of Queen Elizabeth. It is a tiny thing but beautiful. Several little diamonds and rubies make it up. You see the letters E. R. formed; also a microscopic lid opens and you see on either side pictures of Anne Boleyn her mother and of herself.

To-day the Indian delegates are entertaining the other P.M.'s at dinner. Smuts as usual has declined. Meighen is pre-engaged. The other chaps come. It won't be so big as we wished to make it.

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO Mr T. R. VENKATARAMA SASTRI

BRIGHTON

31st July 1921

My dear Venkataraman

I received here yesterday your sad letter containing the news.<sup>1</sup> But my wife's letter had been before yours and told me.

You did your best for her. Let her go. She has had her share of joy and grief. I well remember those Triplicane days in South Mada St., when I first saw her. She then had severe fits of asthma, poor girl! What a distance between that time and this! She has enjoyed much sunshine since. A loving husband, people to serve and help,

1 Of his wife's death.

home comforts above the average, jewels and possessions prized by women, consideration and respect of neighbours, sufficiency of grand-children—well, the world has been good to her by ordinary standards.

Take heart, man. She can't reproach you with reason, nor you her, if I know anything. That can be said of few couples, fewer than we think.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr A. V. PATWARDHAN

HOTEL ASTORIA, BRUSSELS

16th August 1921

My dear Vaman Rao

As guests of the Belgium Government here the Maharao and I are treated very well. The Under-Secretary and the Assistant Secretary of the Foreign Department are in constant attendance on us; the Foreign Minister came down yesterday from the Supreme Council of Paris specially to see us and returned to Paris immediately. His Majesty is to receive us to-day. I go to Antwerp this afternoon and return at night. To-morrow I go to Liege and return at night. The day after *i.e.*, Thursday I shall be back in London. On the 22nd I shall fly to Paris and spend ten days' time there. Then Geneva.

Lytton, Sir Louis Kershaw, Mr Corbett and myself saw two European representatives from Kenya Colony who have come over to protest against "equality." I had a little "go" at them. But what good! they are refined ruffians.



The shortest programme I can make goes on till April. I don't know what to do. You will see a letter in the *Times* of the 15th over my signature. This town is beautiful and rich and gay. We saw Ostend and Ypres. The Germans have indeed been heartless.

Yours very affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr A. V. PATWARDHAN

LONDON

21st August 1921

My dear Vaman Rao

Winston Churchill is still hesitating over Kenya Colony. The European representatives have frightened him out of his wits. But though he will try to please them, he must conform his decision to the equality principle. Some ingenuity may be required to reconcile the principle and the decision and he has no lack of ingenuity. Still we shall have got four-fifths of what we want; the one-fifth will be camouflaged. The future is safe; that is to say, in the hands of our own people. But they are a poor backward lot and cannot help themselves. Jeewanjee and Varma<sup>1</sup> are good in their way; but their education is slight and their outlook limited.

I shall be sworn of the privy council when I have returned from Geneva, i.e., about the third week of

1 Leaders of the Kenya Indian delegation

October. I am glad and relieved to hear my long coat and turban will pass; otherwise the lowest estimate for the prescribed robe would be £350. For two days I was on tenterhooks.

The Belgian Government did us well indeed. I saw, besides Brussels, Ypres, Ostend, Antwerp and Liege. One must see these places to understand the horrors of war. The most vivid imagination can't picture the havoc. But the Belgians are a plucky, resourceful people and are recovering fast. His Majesty was good enough to receive us, the Maharao and me. He is a very simple man, dressed in Khaki, full of courtesy and kindly inquiries. He is exceptionally tall and bends down gracefully.

The withdrawal of the Munitions case has created a tremendous uproar here. The general impression in high circles is that Holland will have to go. Members of the Cabinet are taking keen interest in the matter.

I am going to Paris the day after morrow—Thursday. On the 1st of September I shall be in Geneva. The Fiji people seem to be in a great hurry. But nothing is decided yet as to my voyage. There is possibility of my going to Australia, etc. first and finishing up with Canada. In this case I shall have to go through the canal and past Aden, and may therefore have a week or fortnight in India on the way. But this is a faint hope so far.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

PARIS

1st September 1921

My dear Vaman Rao

Great events take place in India. The Moplah outbreak and the Munitions scandal are enough sensation in the political world.

I fear the period of my exile is lengthening. It is a great grief to me. I shan't be free to leave England till near the end of November. Then to fulfil my projected tour and do Fiji besides requires many months. The mere voyages and travels by rail consume three months. My calculation takes me to the beginning of June when I shall be in Colombo. Of course I must rush to be in Poona for the 12th of that month. The Government of India are anxious for me to go to Fiji as early as possible. That is not easy. I must begin with Canada, for Mr Meighen, my friend, may go out of office at the ensuing general election. Besides, Massey and Hughes don't wish me to go to their places when their Parliaments are in recess. Also I think, I must have finished a part at least of my tour and been received with honours in the neighbouring dominions.

It is difficult for me to get anybody to join this deputation. Purshotamdas is going back for his daughter's health. Jamnadas<sup>1</sup> is on the fiscal committee. Hasan Imam won't leave his practice. Sapru can't be spared. Kunzru is my own man. In the circumstances I have

1 Jamnadas Dwarkadas.

suggested C. P. Ramaswami. He will make a splendid impression.

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Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr R. SURYANARAYANA RAO

LONDON

11th October 1921

My dear Suryanarayana Rao<sup>1</sup>

I am obliged for your long and interesting letter and wish you could find time for more such letters. Let me not, however, tax you more than you can bear.

The publicist who criticises Gandhi, whoever he is, is not right to call him either voluble or volatile. Gandhi is the very negation of these qualities and therefore very formidable. He is determined, calculating, high-motived, clear-spoken. K. Natarajan has now come to see that Gandhi has mistaken his vocation. I said this long ago.

This morning's news is that he has in so many words called on the Government to arrest him. How can Government forbear any more? Of course the outcome will be terrible. You and I can't help it. But we can

1 Member, S. I. S.

weep, let us do so. If a great man, honoured and venerated as semi-divine, *will* run amok and occasion a tragedy, he can do so. There must be a tragedy. He plays his part, Government plays its part, and between them, the country bleeds, suffers and loses. Fate, my dear man, fate!

Duty has myriad faces. She has a face of sternness, horror, and grim resoluteness to Gandhi. He is not the man to turn his gaze away. He looks her full in the face, and with the iron discipline of his will, rejoices in her exactions, almost saying "the more of these the better."

I believe he is distracted and sees things entirely out of focus. I do not accuse him, as others do, of vanity, ambition, or wantonness of mischief. He is a Colossus playing on a vast stage with vast issues. Every nod, every movement of his produces vast consequences. A mistake on his part is necessarily an unspeakable calamity. And he is hugely, irredeemably mistaken. Woe to India!

I haven't been writing to him. It is no good. He strokes me, likes me, indulges me, as you might conceive a lion to do towards a mouse. But that is all. I do not like to play that part even to Gandhi.

You say "after all he is our countryman." So he is. Does it mean we should fold up our hands and watch, may be, wring our hands, when he wreaks his unrelenting, disastrous will on the country? I do not agree. We must combat and counteract all we can. If Government curb his freedom, it does so not a moment too soon. My sympathy, my support must go to Government. I cannot let my regard for Gandhi swallow up my love of country.

I write at length lest a sneaking hero-worship turn you aside from the clear path of duty. Be strong. Hero-worship is a weakness, a mark of slave mentality, if it leads you to aid and abet, to tolerate or acquiesce in, the crimes (used in a non-moral sense, please) of a great man. Honour for the virtues, respect for the motives, but condemnation for the errors and opposition to their grievous consequences.

You know, don't you, I have never begrudged my praise or weighed my words in a niggardly spirit when his greatness was the theme.

Farewell, Suryanarayana Rao. You don't blame me—do you?—for preaching at you.

Believe me as ever

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr A. V. PATWARDHAN

LONDON

March 1922

My dear Vaman Rao

The impressions of a teetotalter on the efficacy of prohibition in the United States are not good for much. But one heard so much on the subject during the Conference on the Limitation of Armaments<sup>1</sup> that it might conceivably

<sup>1</sup> Mr Sastri was India's representative at the Washington Conference.

be of interest to our readers<sup>2</sup> in India, where so many eager minds are directed to the total prevention of drink. Controversy is still bitter in the United States, as is to be expected where vested interests and habits have acquired great intensity. Opinion therefore on the spot is varied and even contradictory. One even heard of an early repeal of the Prohibition Law—and of the attempts made in several parts of the continent to stir up an agitation with that view. Others like the workers of the Y. M. C. A. and other enthusiasts were sanguine that prohibition was striking root in the moral sentiments of the people and that the shrinking of facilities for drunkenness would complete the good work. One odd feature of the situation, which illustrates perhaps the perversity of human nature, was that every now and then one came across an earnest man or woman who declared that he or she had been a teetotaler before the Prohibition Law, but had subsequently taken to drink as a protest against the interference of that Law with the freedom of the individual. The reformer cites the abolition of the saloon as a gain of inestimable value to the cause of sobriety. The factory owner and the farmer reap immense advantage from the disappearance of this institution, and they may be trusted to resist to the utmost its revival in any shape or form. The contemptuous view of prohibition which one hears so often in certain circles of Europe is derived from a limited observation of the conditions obtaining in the large towns on the eastern sea board. Here the enormous wealth of the population and the facilities for smuggling combine to make drink available to those that ardently seek it in

<sup>2</sup> These impressions were published in 'The Servant of India'.

hotels and restaurants. At private parties too people draw on the hoards of wealthy citizens which are supposed to be immense. In the west and middle west, however, which are often represented as the real America, these opportunities for the maintenance of the old habit do not exist and prohibition seems to be fairly effective. On a large view of the matter the prospects of the Dry Law even on the East Coast are not gloomy. The very fact that drink except in private houses has to be indulged in secretly constitutes a great hindrance and must tend to the disappearance of the evil in the long run. Then at all public and semi-public functions in which the great officials take part no wine is served, its place being taken by a medicinal beverage which is called whiterock. To the students of human affairs this fact would constitute a second big hindrance. The greatest hope of the reformer remains to be mentioned. It resides in the probability that the new generation of Americans, uncorrupted by the habits of their fathers and grandfathers, will grow up in an atmosphere of respect for the Prohibition Law and the present defects in its working will be made up for by the willing acquiescence of the citizens of the future.

Of the various triumphs of the Conference on the Limitation of Armaments at Washington, the one that caused the greatest wonderment to the outside world as well as to those that took part at the fateful gathering was the agreement as to the restriction on the strength of the naval forces, absolutely and relatively, of the various Powers of the world. The manner in which the agreement came about was no less remarkable than its substance. On the opening day no sooner had the chairman



of the Conference, Mr Hughes,<sup>1</sup> been appointed than he delivered a speech which contained precise and detailed proposals for the limitation of naval armaments. These proposals dealing with the navies of several countries must have occupied Mr Hughes and the American naval experts for many weeks previously. Yet, when the delegations assembled in the metropolis of the United States, not a whisper was audible in any circles and even the omniscient American press did not know that a great surprise was in store. When the full nature of the proposals was disclosed, some persons, seemingly wise, told each other with confidence that the previous consent of the heads of the principal delegations must have been taken before so momentous a plan could be announced to the world challenging the Powers as it were to say yes or no, and be approved or condemned by the judgement of an eager and expectant world. When Mr Balfour a little later protested earnestly that he had been taken unawares as much as anybody else though he had met Mr Hughes in private a few hours before the latter's opening speech, it was realised for the first time how wonderfully the secret had been kept. People remembered the ways of the old diplomacy, its euphemisms and concealments, its periphrasis and indirectness, its mystifications and long-drawn delays and prognosticated a point blank refusal from the Powers startled and irritated by the bluntness of a Government which had kept ostentatiously aloof from the courtesies as well as the entanglements of the

1 Secretary-General of the U.S.A.

old world. The atmosphere at Washington, however, was fully charged with the spirit of the new diplomacy. The delegations did not take long to realise that the world had become tired of the traditional hypocrisy of European Chancellories and that the hour had struck for a striking manifestation of the new international morality. The deafening applause that greeted the announcement by Balfour and Kato of the consents of their Governments was only the outward symbol of the rejoicings of the earth's peoples. The old diplomacy is dead, long live the new.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To HIS BROTHER V. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

S. W. LONDON

10th May 1923

My dear Ramaswami

I am kept busy with interviews and speeches at small meetings. The importance of the subject and the risks to India and the Empire are realized. My coming has been of the greatest possible use. I don't hope to turn everything my way. But people, I mean our friends and sympathisers, are relieved because I am here. They at least believe I shan't sell India, but may render her good service! Wedgwood was quite delighted at a small speech of mine to the M.P.'s the other day. He is not easily pleased. But the two most important bits of work, I have

done so far are my interviews (1) with Lionel Curtis and the Editor of the *Round Table* and (2) with the Duke of Devonshire and Sir James Masterton Smith, the permanent Colonial Under-Secretary. I have produced a very good impression all round. The Duke in particular went the length of saying he would bring about private meetings between me and Lord Delamere and hoped for good results. Of course, our cynical matter-of-fact friends will say 'What is the tangible result?' I daren't hope for much. But I am doing my best. Everybody here looks up to me as the principal man, and I lose no opportunity. For instance, last night Lord Pentland introduced me at dinner to the *Eighty Club*, an important Liberal Association. I was asked to say a few words, and urged them to watch the Colonial Office and the India Office at the Kenya job and not let them lower the credit of Great Britain and imperil the Empire. I could see my words told, few as they were. I have met Lord Hardinge, Sir Valentine Chirol, the Overseas editor of the *Times*. Henderson and Ben Spoor. Others I am arranging to see, and numerous meetings have opened their doors to me. Ramsay MacDonald can't see me, he says for pressure of business. But his paper has written on our side.

I hope you have seen my interview to the *Manchester Guardian*, and you will see, along with this week's mail, an article in *The New Age*, the new weekly of Major Arthur Moore. Big placards in the streets announced this article yesterday. Another weekly, *The Outlook* has some vile stuff against me, a note and a letter. I shall enclose the letter as it is the viler of the two.

My interviews with Lord Peel and Lord Winterton and then with Sir Louis Kershaw were long affairs. I kept

nothing from them and was more blunt than is my nature. I spoke sharply in places and surprised even Jamnadas. Lord Peel has been very good to us, arranging several luncheon parties where we could meet influential persons.

The Wood-Winterton agreement Peel swears by, so does the Duke. To this they seem, rather the Duke seems, to wish to add some restrictions on immigration of general application, that is to say, on British and Indian alike. I see many minds work here in this direction. "Natives' interests" is the present cry. I am fighting the idea as hard as I can. I question the *bona fides* of the suggestion openly. I doubted their ability to work the restrictions impartially, arraigning the local Government and the Colonial Office for their past misconduct. They took all this in good part and professed to be absolutely genuine and impartial.

Please give copies of this letter to Mr Seshagiri Aiyar and Annamalai Chettiar marking them *private*. Also to Poona.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr G. A. NATESAN

LONDON

22nd May 1923

My dear Natesan

The regular conference has not begun yet, and I am spending my time, as others are, in seeing M.P.'s and

others who may influence the decision. The matter will be delayed much longer than we foresaw, and we shall all miss, I fear, the Simla session of the legislature. I can't guess yet what shape the decision will take, but it would be a miracle if it was very much in our favour and we should be fortunate if we won partially. The long start the other side had in propaganda work, along with the natural partiality of kinship, has told decisively against us, and I am frequently shocked in my interviews at the amount of reactionary opinion that is to be found in high places. Our difficulties are very great.

I have now to tell you of the plan on which we are agreed, Messrs Andrews and Polak, the men of the Kenya deputation and we of the legislature in India. Sir Dinshaw Petit and Mr Jinnah are still in Paris and we know nothing of their views except what we gathered in our talks on board. This agreement was reached at a meeting convened by the Aga Khan in the Ritz Hotel on the night of the 3rd of this month after a long discussion.

1. We are to stand firm for India's right of emigration to Kenya, no more restriction than there is at present.

2. On the other points we should abide by the Wood-Winterton agreement, *i.e.*, no segregation; the highlands question to remain open; the franchise to be common; based on uniform qualifications, ten per cent of our community to get the vote, and the constituencies to be so arranged as to give us four out of the total of eleven elective seats.

On the question of strategy, it was understood that the Kenya Indians were to bid high on these last points, but

that I should accept the compromise and then they should acquiesce reluctantly. Kamath had not arrived at the time of this understanding; but he has since given full consent.

You would regret, I am sure, that the part of compromising has fallen to me. I regret it too. But I have nothing to lose by way of popularity and the press cannot abuse me worse. So it does not matter so very much after all. Somebody has to bear the odium, why not I?

Mr Andrews, after arguing vehemently on board against some of these points during the voyage, has now embraced them with equal vehemence, as though nothing else was to be thought of. Polak has the entire credit of this conversion. In fact they both think (in their hearts and very privately) that ten per cent of our people are not fit for the vote, and that four out of eleven seats is a very good proportion. Mr Varma, barrister, of the Kenya deputation, told me that, if they gave us more seats, we should hardly find the men for them.

The white settlers are insisting on two points (a) our immigration should be stringently restricted (b) the franchise should be communal. Some friends of ours among the Europeans here think that to reject the communal franchise and break the negotiations for that reason, would be to put ourselves in the wrong, mainly because the Indian franchise itself is so largely communal! Sir Dinshaw Petit and Jinnah are strong for a communal franchise. As for immigration, a few friends who stand out for equality, the *Round Table* chaps for example, are proposing the American plan of a quota which is a definite percentage on the existing population of each community. The white settlers won't agree; but if they for some

reason did we might also have to yield. If you could give this letter or a copy to Ramaswami he would see that it was circulated to the usual group of friends, Poona, etc. I should like Mr Seshagiri Aiyar and Mr Annamalai Chettiar also to get copies marked 'Confidential.'

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To HIS BROTHER V. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

MYSORE

12th November 1923

My dear Ramaswami

We are doing Mysore in fine style. But for the baby which now and then keeps either mother or daughter in, occasionally both, we should be out nearly all day. With a car and a coach at our command, we could do more.

Coming into the city the other day we saw the palace and its environs in a blaze of lights, turrets and mandaps and gates and ponds illuminated and standing out solid against the blue sky as though they were all made of solid fire. 15,000 bulbs did the miracle. It is in honour of the Dipavali. We saw the thing from about 7-45 till 9. Then the whole show vanished into thin air as by magic. So we came in good time, as designed by the Private Secretary.

Ordinarily Mysore is the best-lit town in India. From the Chamundi hill, 1,000 feet higher than the town and a few miles away, the city at night is a forest of lights—a bit of heaven where thickest with stars fallen on earth.

We live in a beautiful house, beautifully situated and beautifully furnished. The food is rich and varied, too nice for any of us. The attention is enough to demoralize us. The Yuvaraja came here yesterday and offered to do any service, I had only to command him!

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Sir MIRZA ISMAIL

BASAVANGUDI

4th December 1923

My dear Mirza Sahib

I suppose, when this letter reaches you, the end of your anxieties and labours in connection with a great event will have become visible. I hope it has gone off well and without a hitch or untowardness. Of course, the outstanding results are embodied in the Viceregal announcements, which, though not entirely comprehensible to me, are understood to be favourable to Mysore. For these as for the arrangements of hospitality and entertainment the credit is in considerable measure due to your foresight and organizing ability and exquisite tastes. Yours is an office of a peculiar type, where duty defies definition, work and leisure mix all the time, care is the rule and enjoyment the exception, and the appearance of power and its reality are poles apart. Still one can sincerely congratulate you on the good fortune which has given you a master, whom, by all accounts, it is a pleasure to serve and a privilege to love, for in him are combined in just and pleasing proportion the qualities of command without



offence, consideration for others' feelings, power to appreciate and zeal to reward.

I make no attempt to count or estimate my obligations to His Highness, which I shall always cherish with the utmost gratitude. I am conscious I have not deserved them even in part nor ever shall deserve. For that reason His Highness's kindness and condescension appear to me the more remarkable, and they are eloquent testimony not only to his good nature, but to the chaste and exalted conception which both as a reverent and devout follower of the ancient dharma of this land, and as a discriminating student of Western culture, he has formed of the great station which it is God's pleasure that he should fill. May he long fill it, toiling for the welfare of his subjects, winning their love ever more and more, and setting an example to the Princes of India of how a State should be governed and fitted to become a worthy part of a great and self-governing country!

In three weeks more I shall be leaving Bangalore to resume my normal duties. I need only say that, besides being most comfortable and delightful, my stay here has been profitable and helpful in the highest degree; for the climate has made me strong to serve India, what I have heard here has made me hopeful of our people's power of self-rule, and the natural beauties of Mysore, which you have enabled me to see, have made me love our common country more than ever.

Believe me always,

Yours very sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To THE EDITOR OF *THE LEADER*

CAWNPORE

3rd April 1924

Dear Sir

You traverse nearly all the arguments advanced by Dewan Bahadur Ramachandra Rao and Mr Venkatapathy Raju in defence of their conduct during the last session of the Assembly,<sup>1</sup> and you sum up, if I may say so without offence, by administering a gentle and reluctant reprimand. The contention is just that it should not be open to individual members of a political party to take action contrary to a principle or established practice of the party without agreement amongst the leaders or at a general meeting. Messrs Rao and Raju apparently maintain that there was no agreed policy from which they deviated. Without admitting this plea altogether, I believe there was sufficient of an unexpected nature in the circumstances of the last session to require an exercise of independent judgement. The great demand for Indian Home Rule, now happily common ground among political parties, had come up on the agenda, and the almost universal feeling was that the demand should have the backing of all the progressive elements in the Assembly. The Swarajists, under the skilful lead of Pandit Motilal Nehru, ceased all talk of wrecking and made the comparatively mild proposal of strictly parliamentary obstruction to be adopted only in case of a three-fourths majority of the Coalition party declaring that the answer

1 In voting with the Swarajists.

of Government was unsatisfactory. My calculation from the beginning was that this three-fourths majority would be secured in any event by the determined and disciplined Swarajist corps of forty-six. But there were others of influence among the Independents, who felt hopeful of being able to prevent a three-fourths vote after having presented the demand in full force. All aspects of the question being under continual discussion day after day and appeals to patriotism and united efforts 'for once' being incessant, is it any wonder that the Independents tumbled over one another into the new organisation? Our friends of the Liberal Party, be it said to their credit, were among the last to fall, and Mr Ramachandra Rao held out till some of his electors actually called upon him to join. Through a morbid dread of being encumbered by adherents of doubtful quality, members of the Council of State and nominated members of the Assembly had, at an early stage, been barred out of the Nationalist party. Messrs Rao and Raju were thus the only two eligible Liberals. Remember too that both come from the Andhra country, where extremism and non-co-operation have long found firm lodgement. It is easy to understand why they let themselves be dragged by the main current more than their compatriots who owed their seats to the favour of Government. I did not and do not approve of their course. But having been a daily witness of the happenings in Delhi, I know how difficult their situation was. I know also that they shrank from the great lengths to which their Swarajist colleagues were prepared to go, and that to their firm stand, as to that of some others, must be ascribed the reversion, after the first day's indiscriminate rejection of grants, to the normal course of discussion on

the merits. The rejection of the Finance Bill was a manœuvre adopted almost at the last moment as on the whole less damaging to the reputation of the party than the passing of the numerous amendments which would have made very large and indefensible reductions in the revenue.

Taking all these circumstances into consideration, I must say I am not prepared to hold that Messrs Rao and Raju have committed an act of indiscipline or political apostasy. But I applaud your having criticised their conduct with candour and in public. It is the ill-natured whisper going round in private which does harm to the coherence of the party. I have had some experience in this line. Open criticism is met with open explanation, and the residue is an honest difference of opinion which we may well allow to one another.

Our friends complain, in the course of their self-defence, that, while at one end they are taken to task for action which is too advanced, there are some at the other end who are responsible for action which is distinctly backward, but escape judgement. Your answer is adequate in substance. One cannot, however, get rid of the impression that you are much more mild in the latter than in the former case. For some reason or other, it is considered by some liberals a greater sin against their creed to agree occasionally with their extremist countrymen than to fall in, as a matter of settled habit, with the views of Government. One almost suspects there are some regulation standards, known only to an irreproachable few, of strength of language and even tone of utterance beyond which criticism and indignation cannot go on liberal platforms without incurring the charge of being tinged

with non-co-operation. Eager natures are bound to recoil from such standards and go a little beyond the border line, when they find the really bold and progressive programme of Liberalism handicapped in execution by excessive timorousness or consideration for the susceptibilities of the powers that be.

Dear Editor, the malady of the Liberal Party is deeper than some of us are willing to believe. Events have moved on in their heedless way and left the old Liberalism a little behind. Instead of keeping in step with the rest of the world the orthodox champions of the creed would, if they could, begin to cast out the heretics, preferring the strait and narrow doctrine to a truer apprehension of the environment and a wider comprehension of the energy and patriotism around. In this we seem to reproduce with excessive fidelity the old ceremonial spirit of caste, which continually drew its boundaries closer in the never-ending pursuit of an imaginary purity. In England Liberalism and Socialism, and in fact every other school of social and political thought that has taken a name and individual form, have never been the same from decade to decade. Indian Liberalism, as a definite party, has many things to learn, many lessons to assimilate. Let us not so soon erect a stake for the heretics amongst us. We are too few to divide further. Tolerance, not rigidity of faith, should be our motto; greater, not less, response to the hurrying forces around should be our aim.

V. S. SRINIVASAN

[The Editor of *The Leader* commented:—

We have almost not a word to say in disagreement with the substance or the tone of this admirable letter of Mr Sastri's.

We are painfully aware of the many and serious imperfections of the very weak Indian Liberal Party organisation. And we have never had in mind the remotest idea that 'a stake' should be erected 'for the heretics amongst us'. Our whole point was and is that action such as Messrs Rao and Raju took was not calculated to unite together, instead of dividing further, the by no means well-knit party to which they and Mr Sastri and we have the honour to belong. We have not the slightest hesitation in avowing our conviction that the action of conservative Liberals at the opposite extreme is fully as damaging to the cause. Having drawn pointed attention to this nearly fatal weakness of a party already lamentably weak, we may well end this discussion in the hope that the two foremost men among the active leaders of the party, we mean, of course, Mr Sastri himself and Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, the Presidents of this and the last year, will actively set themselves to remove the causes of weakness and disunion as far as possible and to strengthen the party organization.]

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To Mr HOPE SIMPSON, M.P.

(CAMP) CAWNPORE

10th April 1924

Dear Mr Hope Simpson

I duly received your kind cable in reply to mine regarding Kenya.<sup>1</sup> Your letter arrived yesterday. I am grateful for both.

1 To Mr Hope Simpson and Sir Benjamin Robertson who were on The Crown Colonies Committee, Mr Sastri cabled: 'India prayerfully trusts you will preserve her self-respect and Britain's honour. The Empire cannot long survive the extension of the colour bar beyond South Africa.' Mr Hope Simpson cabled back to say that he would do his best.

Mr Hope Simpson was also Chairman of the Liberal Party Committee on Indian Affairs.

Reuter tells us that the Colonies Committee have begun conversations at the India Office and that an early interview with the Colonial Secretary has been fixed up. It is a pity the Aga Khan should have fallen ill just now, but I trust by the time this letter reaches you he will have returned from Paris, and you will have till the end of the negotiations the uninterrupted benefit of his wide knowledge and shrewd diplomacy. You will have received a copy of a pamphlet, published by the Servants of India Society, containing a small collection of what I have said and written regarding Kenya. If you happen to have time, may I ask you to read in particular my speech on 'Africa or India?' delivered at the St. Stephen's College and the one I made in the Council of State on the subject of Kenya? Lord Olivier's insistence on a clear case being made out by the Kenya Government for the necessity for controlling Indian immigration gives hope that the obnoxious bill may yet be dropped, for I do not believe that the facts on the spot or the figures of Indian immigration will enable a case to be made out. But Lord Delamere and company are both determined and reckless. To propose the adoption of the automatically impartial principle of the United States of a quota or percentage on the existing population and fight for it without flinching would perhaps be excellent tactics of negotiation, besides being justifiable on its own merits. It will no doubt be a bitter pill for Englishmen to swallow, but the bare truth is that in the more important and ultimate respects, the white man is the enemy of the African native. A matter in which the Indian claim will not be bitterly resented is the increase of representation on the Legislative Council. Lord Olivier's point that under Crown Colony government

the exact numerical strength of a community in the legislature is comparatively unimportant is no doubt just on abstract grounds, but this consideration should be recommended to the whites as well as to the Indians. Why do *they*, with the official majority at their beck and call, insist on having a clear majority even in the non-official part of the legislature? The obvious implication is that the colony is theirs and that everybody else is there only on sufferance. This implication is intolerable. It does not matter one whit to them if the Indian claim to equality is conceded; the equality would at best be theoretical and the whites will remain in reality the undisputed masters of the situation. Apparently the motive behind their unyielding attitude is horror of the equality idea. It is true on our side we are pursuing a mere abstraction, for it will be impossible for our Indians there for a very, very, long time yet to convert this paper equality into anything like real equality for the purposes of material or political advantage. Still, paradoxical as it may appear, the sentiment is a vital issue with us, as it sometimes reconciles us to the Empire. That is why no compromise is possible on it. No mere numerical increase in the representation, no mere approach to equality, will satisfy. If they have eleven, we must have eleven and no less. In all these negotiations the equality test must always be in the mind.

During my last stay in England I had a vivid perception, such as I had not had before, of the strength of certain forces and modes of thought inconsistent with the higher ideals of the Empire and the continuance of India within the Britannic fold. Of course, one feels their overpowering strength in India every day, but one



had hopes that among the chastening influences of the war was a progressive diminution of that strength in the home of Parliamentary institutions. This hope was rudely shaken out of me during the recent Kenya dispute in London.<sup>1</sup> I will take the liberty of choosing two out of many experiences of a disillusioning nature. They are both connected with Sir James Masterton Smith. I conceived great respect for his knowledge, ability and earnestness. But he is typical of the tenacious, hard-headed, immovable British official, whose qualities have been

1 The Kenya humiliation left Mr Sastri bereft of his faith in British sincerity to maintain racial equality. His faith was torn to pieces and it was as though everything he held dear in life perished at one stroke. Sir Valentine Chirol speaks of the effect of the Kenya disappointment on Mr Sastri in the following words: 'Swaraj has now scarcely a more vigorous supporter than Mr Sastri who has represented India with conspicuous dignity on more than one occasion, not only at an Imperial Conference in London, but abroad in the League of Nations at Geneva and at the Disarmament Conference at Washington, and who only a few years ago repeatedly expressed in addressing his fellow-countrymen a faith in the British people and the British Empire such as one rarely hears professed nowadays in India. He has joined those whom nothing will satisfy but the immediate grant of Dominion Self-government; for of what value, he asks, is any promise near or remote, of partnership in the British Commonwealth of Nations if England who claims still to act as trustees for India will not or cannot safeguard the existing rights of Indians in the self-governing Dominions of the Empire, or even in her own colonies directly subject to her control? Only, he declares, when India is fully self-governing can she hope to have a government that will be able to uphold the rights of overseas Indians with the same determination with which a self-governing Dominion denies them to-day.'

invaluable in the building up of this great Empire, but have become positively harmful to its conservation and maintenance in the new era of the peace of the world and the brotherhood of nations. In justification of the Kenya decision he said once that India might carry equal weight in the counsels of the Empire with the Dominions a few years hence, but that now she cannot expect her point of view to prevail in any big dispute. Another time, in the presence of the Duke of Devonshire, who listened in an attitude of mute reverence and wonder which was a study in itself, he depicted, in the hard, cold, pseudo—scientific language characteristic of the *Round Table* the struggle going on at present between two rival ideals of the British Empire—the one tending towards the equality of races and communities, the other insisting on the maintenance of white supremacy. The latter ideal, till recently undisputed, even now is in practice dominant, and prevails in most matters of importance. The former ideal, young and growing, prevails only occasionally. It is not right to state (as I had done before he began to speak) that it is the only or the prevailing ideal of Empire and that the present controversy must be settled in accordance with it. On the other hand, a practical politician must be prepared, not only for the older ideal prevailing in any particular matter, but for its eventually vanquishing its younger rival and re-establishing itself in an incontestable position. You will understand, of course, that the language is mine while the thought is Sir James's. Nothing would be new to you in what I have narrated except the candid admission that, where India is concerned, British policy moves most often on the lower, and not on the higher, plane. Public controversy is handi-

capped and to some extent vitiated by the assumption that Parliament and British statesmen are invariably guided by the nobler ideal; attempts to justify British action as fulfilling this high test must appear to the aggrieved Indian mind not only far-fetched but hypocritical. Believe me, thoughts of this kind have driven me, more than anything else, to the conclusion that it is necessary immediately to bring practice into conformity with theory and confer on India and Indians real equality and partnership. A decade more or a decade less should not matter to a nation, if reason and good faith guided our mutual relations. But we cannot afford a prolongation of the struggle described by Sir James Masterton Smith between an old, established and dominant ideal on the one hand and a new, incipient and puny ideal on the other. King and Parliament are alike pledged to the new ideal. Delay, though desirable on some grounds, is prolific of miscarriage, breeds distrust not, alas, without justification, and exacerbates ill-feeling. Full preparedness, perfect fitness, ripe maturity, these are counsels of perfection. Nothing in this imperfect world comes exactly at the moment fixed for it by idealists. In the rough school of life peoples are often fitted for institutions by the practice of them. The time required for Indianisation of the Civil Services and the much longer time required for the Indianisation of the Army, assuming that a genuine and energetic policy for the latter was in operation, are themselves guarantees that the process of consummation, even if it suffered no check, would not be marked by undue haste or precipitation. Good policy requires that the demand made recently in the Assembly, with the concurrence of the moderate as well as the advanced school

of politics, be met in a spirit of sympathy and hearty response.

To complete the case on the practical side, powerful arguments could be adduced, drawn from the experiences of the transitional system. In the provinces Ministers have done much only where Governors loyally carried out the recommendation of the Joint Select Committee of 1919 and worked diarchy without emphasising its harsher features. In other cases the machinery generated too much friction and, if the outspoken evidence of Ministers was taken, it would point to the need as well as the safety of establishing complete provincial autonomy. In the Centre you should have seen, as I did, the daily work of the Assembly to realise the utter impossibility of the situation. Government were defeated whenever the Swarajist majority cared. Their character, efficiency and motive were impugned without mercy. They stood denuded of the last vestige of authority or reputation. It was a pity to watch the members of government keeping up a hopeless fight. It would not be appropriate of me to say that I commiserated them, but I will venture this observation; no Government has the right to subject its highest representatives for any continued length of time to the cares and humiliations, which were the daily lot of Sir Malcolm Hailey and his colleagues in the last session. Thanks to the narrow policy of the last two years, the Viceroy and his council have now to reckon with Pandit Motilal Nehru, Mr Patel and Mr Chamanlal in the place of Sir Sivaswami Aiyar, Mr Samarth and Sir Devaprasad Sarvadhikary. With Montagu out of office and Gandhi in jail, reaction pulled itself together and began to govern in the old spirit of isolation, treating

friend and foe alike, boasting in season and out of season of its exclusive responsibility to the Imperial Parliament and setting at naught even the expressions of *united* Indian sentiment. No wonder moderates hung down their heads and were scattered. Did you realise that in the new Assembly, out of six liberal members, as many as four have come in by nomination? The only two elected liberals were inevitably drawn into the nationalist party and voted for refusal of supplies. No one would have thought this possible in 1921. It may be comforting to the official mind, but it is neither truthful nor just, to attribute the whole of this change to the untrained electorate, the feeble moderate or the accursed Swarajist or all put together. The general policy and attitude of Government has made undoubtedly the largest contribution. Official excesses when non-co-operation had to be repressed, the certified salt duty, the Kenya wrong, the omission, still continuing, to make rules under the Act, for transfer of political power and the nullification of the principle of non-intervention when legislature and executive in India should agree—these are prominent symptoms of the spirit injurious to the growth of confidence and goodwill between the races. You may feel difficulty in realising this. We breathe it in the air here. Even the Swarajist in his anguish cries out occasionally ‘Oh, for some magnanimous gesture, some proof of a changed heart, some hope of real citizenship of the Empire!’

The desire to stand aloof from all parties in this country, to keep everybody at arm’s length, and to govern in isolation, however intelligible before the Reforms, is now inexpedient and fraught with danger, because we now have a direct electorate in all parts of the country which

elects members to fairly large popular houses of legislature. The difficulty of governing in isolation is brought out strikingly by the recent action of Lord Lytton in Bengal. He has found it necessary, in order to withstand the unreasoning opposition of the Swarajist party, to call together under his own roof those members of the legislature who are inclined to be friendly and endeavour to consolidate them into a regular party. He has been fiercely attacked for this step, which is described as not befitting a constitutional Governor, and I have defended him in an article which will appear to-day in the "Servant of India" of which, I hope, you are regularly receiving a copy. The logical consequence of consolidating a Government party is perhaps only dimly perceptible to-day. But if the non-official members of that party know their business at all, they can bring the general policy of Government in the reserved as well as in the transferred departments into greater or less conformity with their own wishes, and the arrangement will then become compatible with representative institutions. To some extent responsible government would be anticipated in a sort of convention, and transition to the final stage will be facilitated in consequence. Perhaps in course of time, if one may conceive Lord Lytton's experiment to be followed up, the leader of the house would summon the party meeting instead of the Governor, who may progressively recede into his constitutional position. At one time my personal faith in the method of forming conventions was so great that I actually thought it possible to anticipate responsible government at the Centre by getting the non-official Indian members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, though appointed by the Crown, to regard them-

selves in actual practice as responsible to the Assembly and resign office whenever they would resign if in reality they were responsible. This hope has come to nothing for reasons which I cannot explain fully within the compass of this letter. In one of my interesting conversations with an Executive Councillor of the Viceroy on the eve of the Reforms, we were both trying to picture the future. He then confided to me his anticipation that the transition would be intolerably irksome to all parties and that his one anxiety was that the first officials under the new regime should so contrive things that, when they transferred responsibility, they should transfer it in the first instance to the party friendly to the British connection, so that the beginnings of responsible government would be laid in a solid foundation of loyal attachment to the suzerain power. Well, I wonder what he thinks now. His successors have so contrived things that the liberal party is nowhere, and when the transfer does happen, it will happen in circumstances by no means propitious to the growth of friendly feeling between the peoples who have been long held together in mutual political association. You may remember I said to a meeting of members under the auspices of the Empire Parliamentary Association that a great authority in India had told me, 'We have given you all that the act actually prescribes. We will do no more.' Perhaps I annoyed a section of my audience at the time. That, however, sums up the attitude of those who have the ordering of affairs here; to live exclusively for the present so as to avoid the reproach of disobeying the Act, but to do nothing by way of preparing for the future although the Act itself distinctly looks forward to a great future. But here the attitude is one of hesitancy.

and doubt as to whether the future is actually to be realised. Another mighty effort must be put forward by interested parties and Parliament must be persuaded to enact a further stage in the reforms before the men on the spot will awake to the situation and then adjust themselves—still to the extent absolutely required and no further! This seems to me a necessary condition of progress in democracy—a never-ending tug of war, the combatants constantly on the strain and now and then more on the strain, that is all. I have occasionally dreamed that after Ireland and Egypt the political progress of India might be laid on smooth rails; but apparently I was mistaken. All reform in the story of man must be paid for still in the good old way—by conflict and travail, by bitterness and tears.

It is now definitely settled that I should go over to England as a member of a political deputation on behalf of the National Convention and likewise on behalf of the Liberal Federation. I am sailing by s.s. Macedonia on the 26th of this month along with Dr Annie Besant. Looking forward to an early interview on our arrival about the middle of May,

I remain, with all kind regards,

Yours sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASAN

P. S.

Since this letter was finished, a cable has appeared in the daily press containing a forecast of the cabinet committee on India by a writer in the *Observer*. He says nothing dramatic will be done and the India Government's



guidance will be mostly accepted. The concluding sentence of the cable is: "The absence of disturbances in India has tended to dissipate some doubts which certain labour ministers may have entertained with regard to the wisdom of the Government of India's general policy towards Indian political aspirations." That last sentiment conveys a lesson not altogether new to India, but daily more widely assimilated by the people. Kenya has taught it to us in a way we cannot forget. It is idle to talk of our quietly working the reforms and *thereby* showing our fitness for further reforms. We may show our fitness in that way ten times over, but the British nation will not know, Parliament will not care, and the Cabinet will not stir, till there is trouble in India. You may wish that trouble was not necessary for progress; you may say that occasionally trouble has not been necessary for progress; but you cannot assert with confidence that trouble will not be necessary for the progress of India.

Just let me add an observation which will put the point in another light. Those who ask for proofs of India's fitness for Swaraj may be thinking of two very different sorts of fitness; fitness for winning Swaraj is proved by the capacity to make trouble on a formidable scale. Fitness for *using* Swaraj is proved by measures conducing to the public good and showing the qualities of public spirit, national, as distinguished from parochial or sectarian, outlook and courage to execute large and beneficent policies in the face of difficulty. If people in England will not actually confound the two, they are likely to measure the second by the first. The criterion is not, however, so applicable to India as to England. Their

histories have been so different. The left wing in India have made up their minds that what Englishmen look for is only the first sort of fitness. It means a tragedy to both countries. Far-seeing statemanship which, in the words of one of your poets, knows how to take occasion by the hand, can alone undeceive them. It cannot be had in India; there is no scope for its display here. That is why in all political crises we look to England for the vision, the idealism and the driving power.

Yours sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI

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To Mrs SAROJINI NAIDU

30th April 1924

Dear Mrs Naidu

To my grief I cannot accept the invitation to attend the meeting of men of all parties called at Sabarnati. It was exceedingly kind of you to include me in the list of those invited. May I send you a short statement of views? I have not attended any of these All-India meetings for some time, and it is possible that I look at these matters under discussion from a somewhat detached standpoint. First, as to the wearing of *Khaddar*. The full believers in the efficacy of *Khaddar* are admittedly few in number. The great majority of Congressmen, I understand, wear it casually and unwillingly, partly out of reverence to Gandhiji and partly out of constrained loyalty to the compromise agreed upon by their various leaders. Among Liberals and Independents the doctrine

of *Khaddar* is regarded as an extravagance of the old Swadeshi faith, unwarranted by theory or experience and unfitted by its apparent irrelevance to the programme of the Congress to be erected into a condition precedent for admission to that body. While the prescription of a badge of a particular material or colour could not be reasonably objected to, the requirement that a Congressman's entire dress should be made of certain stuff, produced in a certain way, must act as a bar of exclusion against many sincere patriots well-deserving of a place in the premier political organisation of the country, but who have been taught to believe that a sartorial regulation based upon inadequate data and unproven assumptions does violence to the fundamental liberty of the individual. Many persons, a few for whom I entertain respect, are inclined to submit to it as the innocent fad of a great man which it is not necessary for them to examine or understand. I confess I am unable to take this view. It strikes me, even after these many months of thought, as an illegitimate imposition in an organisation purporting to comprehend all progressive politicians.

The second difficulty I feel is in connection with the next general election. Would the Liberals and Independents, who might now come in, be allowed to stand as candidates even against the Swarajists and the Responsivists? So far these two sections have come to a mutual understanding and are entitled, as I understand the situation, to call themselves regular official candidates of the Indian National Congress. Liberal and Independent candidates, wherever they stand, would naturally be denounced as disloyal Congressmen. What would then become of the comprehensive unity which it is the sole

aim of the Sabarmati meeting to attain? People in Britain would be the last in the world to be deceived by a reconciliation of which almost the first visible fruit was the exchange between contending Congress factions of the terms usurper and traitor. The Sabarmati meeting would therefore have to effect a compromise on this question of election, a difficult enough task where only two factions are concerned but nearly impossible when a third comes in with an indefinable claim. Acceptance of office is with us a door to the honourable service of the public. We do not accept the judgement recently pronounced by an influential leader that we value it only for the power and pelf it brings while others would value it on higher and more patriotic grounds. From the year 1918 we have stood for working the reforms for what they are worth. In fact our severance from the Congress was for this express purpose. It would be asking too much of us to expect that we should acquiesce in a compromise which regarded acceptance of office as a step to be explained and apologised for or to depend for sanction on the arbitrary decision of two or three eminent individuals.

The question of civil disobedience is neither so easy nor so simple in my judgement as it appears to most speakers and writers on the problem. I am willing, however, for the moment to repress my misgiving for the sake of general harmony and place full faith in the all but universal admission that the country is not fit for any drastic measures of the kind and will not be fit for many years yet. But the three difficulties I have raised above are serious. I am desirous like others of a common understanding among political parties and of a reunion under the wings of the National Congress. But I wish that our

reconciliation should be based on simple and intelligible agreements; and, being a man of peace, I am not attracted to the idea of re-entering the Congress as a disaffected minority with the prospect of conducting an internecine struggle of indefinite duration for the purpose of becoming the majority.

Yours sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr A. V. PATWARDHAN

10 BUCKINGHAM STREET  
WESTMINSTER, S.W. 1

1924

My dear Vaman Rao

People tell me my incident with Winterton<sup>1</sup> has done a lot of good to Indians. Even second-rate Indians now receive prompt attention and courtesy at the India Office. The messengers and clerks are solicitous of your business and show you where particular officials are to be found. Certainly when I went, I got the most marked civility. So far I have seen Vincent, Robertson, Kershaw, Walton. Neither the Chief nor the Under-Secretary of State was in.

1 In the previous year, i.e., 1923, after months of fruitless negotiation the Baldwin Cabinet decided the Kenya dispute entirely against the Indian claims. Mr Sastri denounced the decision in hot and stinging terms on the eve of his return home. When he went to the India office to take leave, Lord Peel was not in, and Earl Winterton declined to see him. Mr Montagu and others protested strongly, and Lord Peel wrote to Mr Sastri in polite and conciliatory terms.

Three nights ago I was returning home on foot from a dinner with Dalal<sup>2</sup> and was passing a hotel. A man of uncouth appearance, shaggy and awkward in clothes that had not been pressed for a long time, dashed forward in front of me and accosted me as Mr Rangachariar. I expressed my regret I wasn't R., and asked whether I could pass on a message or give R's address, which I knew. 'No thanks, but who are you?' 'I am Sastri.' 'Are you Mr Sastri? I have had the pleasure of seeing you before.' 'If so I have forgotten. Where did we meet?' Then he told me it was at a meeting of the Anti-Slavery Association where I had spoken on Kenya last year. 'May I know who you are?' 'I happen to be the Secretary of State for India.'

Rangachari and Roy<sup>3</sup> have a room in the India Office. They are making no headway. Mr Thomas has seen them but not come to grips. The revised Immigration Bill has come, but it is just as bad as the former, only more vague. Robertson read me a draft of his criticism. It is strong and sound. They refuse to go into the merits and contest the need of a Bill altogether. Roy is changed extraordinarily, he is more irreconcilable than I was, and threatens (in his draft) retaliation in different forms. One of them is to the effect that no Britishers should be employed in the Railways or Mercantile Offices, etc. on the ground that they come into economic competition with

2 High Commissioner for India.

3 K. C. Roy, after whom *Roy's Weekly* is named; he started the A. P. I. news agency and brought it to a flourishing condition. Rangachari (Dewan Bahadur T.) is a famous advocate and prominent politician, now in retirement.

the natives of the country. Rather good, is not it? I approved and feted him. The Aga Khan is in Paris. Hope Simpson I met last night in the H. of C. I have a standing pass to the front row of the Dominions Gallery. This is a newly opened facility for members of other Parliaments. India is reckoned as a Dominion for the purpose. I am honorary Member of the Empire Parliamentary Association. The debate last night was on a resolution brought forward by a Yorkshire miner asking for the extension of the franchise to workmen. A poor show. The labour men spoke out strong for us, straying into general politics and advocating quick advance. Wardlaw Milne (your Bombay man) spoke on the Tory side and quoted me by name. He did well and wasn't bitter. Fisher spoke on the same line, deprecating haste. The Under-Secretary read a long and tedious speech. Winterton followed, the chief point being the fifty millions of depressed classes, etc. He knows by heart all the ugly incidents in that line, however trifling they be. But they all congratulated him on his improved manner. I was surprised, but they told me, "You must have heard the odious fellow last time."

I had been to the House the day before also, when I was fortunate to hear a great speech by Philip Snowden on the Mackenna duties. Mrs Besant has seen the Secretary of State. She instructed him and he listened. Lansbury says he is a log of wood. Graham Pole agreed and is even more caustic. Both he and Richards are bad bargains for India.

Sir Ali Imam is bitter against the *Servant of India* and other Hindu papers. He says they are against the Nizam, only because he is a Mussalman ruler. If a Hindu ruler

had offered Home Rule to a part of his subjects, India would ring with his praise. I have engagements out of London off and on in June and half through July along with Mrs Besant.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr A. V. PATWARDHAN

WESTMINSTER S.W. 1

22nd May 1924

My dear Vaman Rao

As no later letter can reach you before the 12th June, this is the one in which I ought to convey my greetings to you all at the anniversary. May you have a successful session, and may you leave Poona stronger, more hopeful and more united than ever! This is the time to forgive, to forbear, to be blind to faults and kind to virtues. I hope Hariji is well enough to attend. I wrote him the same sort of letter you did. He must get well before he wanders forth.

To sum up the situation here: the Ministry has no big plan for India. It only wishes to tide over the difficulty somehow. The P. M. is the only man that counts. He doesn't wish to do anything *now*. Lord Chelmsford also counts. He is dead against advance. Haldane, according to Willingdon, is a ten-yearwallah. This is the name he gives to all who swear by 1929. Willingdon is wholly



with us and will soon declare himself. Even the Tory papers boom him now, but they will soon curse him. He may preside over our Queen's Hall demonstration on the 25th June. He has already made his first pronouncement at the pro-consuls' dinner, the Secretary of State being present. 'Go ahead quickly and the whole way, or in 18 months there will be no India within the Empire.'

I find Southborough the same as ever, affectionate and most helpful. Wedgwood is more clinging than before. Olivier and Richards show me every mark of respect and attention. My position personally is not shaken a bit. Tell Vaze his recent Kenya articles are eagerly devoured here. Rangachari and Roy are doing well. Roy certainly does not mince his words. Polak will send a summary I have given him of my Bradford speech. It was a large and sympathetic audience we had. Sir Ali Imam is very angry over your *Servant of India* articles on the Berar question. But on Indian politics he is a downright extremist and sees red everywhere. The other day at a dinner to the Secretary of State by Rangachari and Roy, he and Lajpatrai lectured the guest unmercifully. I pity poor Olivier.

Olivier is a simple man. He met me again in the street and wished me to lunch with him, but I have not had a confirming letter. He read me a letter from Reading,—which contrasted strangely with Peel's behaviour and recalled Montagu's to some extent. But he is very weak and carries, I am told by everybody, no weight in the Cabinet. He wants a "Parliamentary case" against the Act and the Rules. I have given him a number of points

in which the India Office has over-ruled the India Government. Richards and he agreed with me that the Secretary of State's Council must go. Hope Simpson withdrew the amendment in his name in the recent debate because, at the instance of Sir Alfred Mond and Sir Malcolm Hailey, the liberal party (and even Asquith) asked him to do so. The liberal party are mostly ten-yearwallahs. So are several men in the present Cabinet. The British Auxiliary of the National Conference is active and meets here every week. So do the prominent Indians in London. Wednesday 3-30 p.m. is the time of meeting of the latter. At yesterday's meeting we resolved, against my judgement, to draw up a memorandum of Indian demands so far as they are common ground, get it signed by all of us, and publish it in the press here. I am to prepare the draft. The Aga Khan is away in Switzerland. Our Indian friends are quite pleased with him. At the deputation that waited on the Secretary of State a few days before I arrived, he spoke strongly and ably. So did Sir Ali Imam. On all sides, even from Anglo-Indians, I hear disapproval of the Judge's remarks and attitude in the O'Dwyer—Sankara Nair case.<sup>1</sup> They are all alarmed for the effect on Indian feeling.

I fear I can't see everybody I want to before August. I am kept busy, and don't feel equal to the strain. In fact I had palpitation from morning till night yesterday, but there were engagements made already and I had to

1 In presenting the Dyer episode to the Jury, Justice McCardie said that 'General Dyer, under the grave and exceptional circumstances, acted rightly, and in my opinion upon this evidence he was wrongly punished by the Secretary of State for India'.

go through them. To-day too I shall be busy after finishing the mail. I must see the doctor soon.

Wishing once more a successful and harmonious session and with cordial greetings to you all, individually and together,

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr D. V. GUNDAPPA

10 BUCKINGHAM STREET

WESTMINSTER S.W. 1

26th June 1924

My dear Gundappa

Yesterday's big demonstration in Queen's hall was a roaring success. I made a rather matter-of-fact unrhetorical speech urging a popular form to be given to the Central Government. I made several points but just made them and passed on. So I took only ten minutes.

They rallied me over it at luncheon to-day. It seems a young lady came up after the meeting to the platform and told one of our group: 'I simply love Mr Sastri.' The ovation for me was so marked that a lady expected, so she says now, the audience to get up and sing "For he is a jolly good fellow." I have had the honour more than once before.

You ask of my health. Let me be truthful. I am very weak, and occasionally during the last few days, I have

felt giddy in walking and been obliged to rest. It means nothing but I must cut short my engagements. There are some important ones which go on till the 10th July. I have just told Mrs Besant I shall go on with them and take a holiday after that. Then I shall put myself under the doctor's orders. Now I defy him, and it is long since I saw him.

I have booked my return passage by the *Naldera* sailing from Marseilles on the 1st of August.

This wretched Government is hanging by a thread but the thread is tough. They may do something, but I am distrustful of MacDonald. I heard a sinister rumour the other day; when he took office, he undertook not to disturb the Indian position. Montagu says it can't be true, though the result will be the same. Mrs Besant saw Olivier two days ago, and says she noticed a great advance in his attitude. I wonder.

Rangachari and Roy and that Kenya Committee<sup>1</sup> met Thomas<sup>2</sup> yesterday. Rangachari says he was terribly disappointed. Chelmsford assured me a fortnight ago we were going to win hands down on the Immigration question. Well, if Rangachari prove a true prophet, I go over, that is all.

Yours very affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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1 The Crown Colonies Committee.

2 J. H. Thomas, the Colonial Secretary in the Labour Cabinets.

January 1925

My dear Vaze<sup>1</sup>

I had noticed the extract from the *Spectator* of December 20 of last year before you sent it to me. I was greatly surprised when I read it as its tenor did not accord with

1 Mr Vaze published this letter in the '*Servant of India*' of January 22, 1925 with the following prefatory note:—

"In a signed review of "John, Viscount Morley" by Brig. Gen. John H. Morgan (Murray) in the *Spectator* of December 20th, 1924, the Editor of the Journal, Mr J. St. Loe Strachey writes as follows on his impression as to what Lord Morley thought of the Montagu-Chelmsford reforms:—

"I may add that, feeling very strongly, as I did, about the Montagu policy, I took this opportunity to play a little of the part he had been playing with Clemenceau and to ask him what he really thought about the state into which India was rapidly drifting. As I felt would probably be the case, I found him very strongly against the new way of governing India. I urged him to speak out—indeed told him it was his duty to do so; but he refused, partly, I think, from the physical difficulty of making a speech in the House of Lords, and partly from his desire not to embarrass the Government and the new Secretary of State.

"It is evident, however, from his talks with General Morgan that what he said to me was no passing impatience, but a settled conviction. Here is a confirmatory passage dated January 21st, 1921:—

Montagu calls himself my disciple, he went on, in accents of repudiation. I see very little of my teaching in him. This dyarchy won't work. As for his strange plea for rousing the masses of India out of their 'pathetic content' by reforms for which they do not ask, and which they cannot work, it's a most unwise remark. My reforms were quite enough for a generation at least."

my recollection of what passed at a small dinner towards the end of 1919. It was at Lord Morley's residence. The party was very small and included, besides the host and myself, Sir Lawrence Jenkins and Sir K. G. Gupta. I believe it was the latter who took the liberty of suggesting that M. should attend the Lords when the Government of India Bill would be passed and pronounce his benediction. The idea was very attractive to Lord Morley; but as he was not sure of his strength, he desired Sir Krishna to remember the matter a few days in advance so that arrangements might be made, if necessary, to conduct him from his conveyance to his seat. I do not remember a single sentiment or expression deprecatory of the scope or provisions of the bill. There was no attempt at discussing the measure seriously or in detail, but his talk was marked by distinct friendliness to it, which gave me a general glow of satisfaction. In fact, I was prepared, in view of what he had said upon a former occasion about the unsuitability of parliamentary institutions for India, for some disapprobation of the Montagu bill. My surprise and satisfaction were the greater for that reason.

I cannot of course shut out of my mind the possibility that at our dinner, Lord Morley did not feel called upon to express himself fully on the subject of Indian reforms. At his age, he would not be eager to provoke a controversy with three such supporters of it as Jenkins, Gupta and

As we in India have received a directly contradictory report of Lord Morley's views about the Montagu Constitution, the Editor of this paper wrote to Mr Srinivasa Sastri requesting him to give his own recollection of the matter and obtained from him the following statement:—

myself. General Morgan and Strachey probably touched the chord of personal antagonism to Mr Montagu and elicited the sympathetic note they wanted.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To HIS EXCELLENCY LORD READING

January 1925

Your Excellency

I am overwhelmed. On the top of a cordial letter in your own hand, you have made a public reference to me in terms of excessive consideration.<sup>1</sup> So much out of the way is it that I have actually been asked whether I am about to retire altogether from public life that the Viceroy should pay a farewell-seeming compliment! How can I thank you adequately? Well, I shall not attempt it, but beg you to imagine the feelings of a man of simple ways who finds himself suddenly smothered beneath garlands and bouquets of exquisite beauty and fragrance.

1 In his speech to the members of the Indian Legislature on the 20th January 1925, His Excellency the Viceroy said:

"There have also been a few changes among the members of the Legislature to which I need not refer in detail; but I am convinced that the members of both the Houses will join me in deploring that ill-health has necessitated the resignation of the Right Honourable Srinivasa Sastri, who has been a member of the Council of State since its inception. I trust his absence from the Legislature will only be temporary and brief and that he will soon be restored to health and enabled once more to add the distinction of his intellectual greatness to the Legislature and to devote his great capacities to public affairs."

Politics, in human practice, divides more than it unites and wrests us, alas, from our real nature so much that sometimes we hardly know ourselves. We are more akin than we realise; a human touch like the one I have just experienced at your hands is a revelation of the golden chain that binds us all together, but is so seldom seen.

Allow me to take this opportunity of paying my humble respects to Her Excellency Lady Reading and my most grateful thanks for the hospitality and personal kindness that she has graciously accorded to me. I indulge the hope that by some fortunate happening I shall still be enabled, before your Excellencies' term reaches its close, to renew the pleasure and the privilege of personal conversation.

I remain

Your Excellency

Very sincerely yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Sir P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR

CAMP: MADURA

29th March 1925

Dear Friend

I was greatly touched as well as flattered by your exceedingly kind letter, making enquiries of my health and suggesting a change of occupation. I do not know how exactly to answer it. A trip to England might do me good, if I went there with no particular mission either political or semi-political. The proposal that you make I should have welcomed two years ago, but at this juncture



I am afraid I shall give it up without much compunction. It is bound to end, if not in failure, in success so very partial as scarcely to differ from it. I see no sign anywhere in England or in India in bureaucratic circles of real desire to help. An outburst of disappointment and anger at the end of the negotiations is certain. I know what it is and will not court such a situation again.

As to my non-political work in future, necessity, if not the prospect of success, would seem to counsel it. Perhaps by the end of June I shall be in a position to announce to you that I have settled down to some unexciting literary enterprise, in which my humour, which you seem to appreciate, will find scope.

I hope that Indore will get some benefit from your labours. I know these will be conscientious and thorough, but the augen stables may prove too much for one whose experience, wisdom and prestige, great as they are, leave him still somewhat less than Hercules.

With affectionate regards as ever  
Yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr D. V. GUNDAPPA

ROYAPETTAH

28th October 1925

My dear Gundappa

For several years, when I was in Mayavaram (between 1888 and 1893) I used to suffer from fits of depression like the one you describe. My feeling was that cruel cir-

cumstances had thrown me into an environment not only uncongenial but utterly beneath me. A sense of wasted opportunity hagrode me day after day. Not till I got a transfer to Salem did I obtain any relief. And that transfer was bitterly opposed by my father and my (then) headmaster. But so clear was my conviction that it was essential for my soul that I risked their serious displeasure and fled!

No escape is possible for you. Conquer your pride instead, and teach yourself the truth—for it is the truth—that you are not thrown away on Mysore State so long as there is something you can do for it. And there is such a lot to do.

Don't treasure your melancholy. You indulge it when it comes instead of shaking it off. Rather should you then seek society, listen to music, watch boys at cricket, visit the cinema and laugh heartily, talk to boys at school on their silly quarrels or fondle little children. Every one of these is a very effective medicine, though no doctor will be sensible enough to prescribe it.

If you write a diary, don't set down these harrowing thoughts. That is to exercise them and harbour them. Take long walks—I mean eight miles or so, not less. Change your food occasionally. I know you will have to dine out for this purpose and order it. Unseasoned food for three nights running and little of it!

With every desire to help and all love,  
always yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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9th December 1925

My dear Sadasiva Aiyar

Did you not say that Morgan's book<sup>1</sup> disappointed you? So have told me many others:—among them Chintamani. This imposed character is a handicap to many professions—the actor, the college don, the politician, etc. Some individuals too go through life with such disability. The most striking instance now is Gandhi. I know one or two people who can make disclosures, showing him to be a human being with human qualities. But eight out of ten readers would say that they had been robbed of a pleasant illusion. Of dead men Gokhale suffered much from indiscriminate attribution of impossibly stilted morals and severity of thought. I much wonder whether a biographer would be considered prudent who ignored the imposed character of his subject, and presented him as he was—warts and all.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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1 See page 265.

To Mr D. V. GUNDAPPA

MADRAS

17th December 1925

My dear Gundappa

Sir John Simon is one of the biggest figures in the liberal party. Next to his professional reputation, his name stands for staunch exposition of free trade. I heard him only once on this subject. He is a forcible and lucid speaker, matter-of-fact and without much subtlety. So far as I know, his only connection with India is his conduct of the Tilak case. He has not interested himself at all in our politics, and I do not think he can be persuaded at any time to take a really liberal view of our case. He is an Imperialist. But he is one of the first two or three men at the bar and will always command great influence in his party. While I respect him, I confess I am not greatly drawn to him.

I have read Spender's book and find it interesting. It is not brilliant or profound; but as the mature thought of a conscientious, well-informed and liberal journalist, it is likely to be widely read and frequently quoted as an authority. He took the chair for me once at the Shakespeare Hut when I spoke on Kenya. I have also seen him at one or two other places. He is attractive and lovable.

Have you read one of the Essays of Elia describing a Quakers' meeting? Even if you have, please read it again. I recently attended such a meeting. It was small, just fifteen, including me, but I was the only visitor. Lamb's description is most apt. Mr Harvey, who is lecturing here and whom the Servants of India Society

entertained the other day, is a Quaker and very earnest and devoted too.

Yesterday, I was the guest at tea of Mrs. Besant. It was to enable me to meet the Australian theosophists, of whom about thirty have come to attend the jubilee of the Theosophical Society. I had a pleasant time there reviving very pleasant memories. In a few days Mrs Besant will possibly make some sort of demonstration in honour of recent legislation in Australia admitting Indians to full citizenship. If this comes about, I shall be the bridegroom of the occasion.<sup>1</sup> There is some gossip for you.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr MIRZA ISMAIL

MYLAPORE

30th July 1926

Dear Friend

Don't mistake me, but I wish to send you a hearty word of approbation for the stand you are making in connection with the trouble in the Bangalore Mills. I heard of your firmness in asserting authority in difficult circumstances. Shiva Rao of the Theosophical Society told me last night—not enough for enlightenment but enough to describe your part—and he was unstinted in praise.

<sup>1</sup> As having been the cause, in his Dominions tour, of the enfranchising legislation.

I hope with all fervour you will be enabled to do the just thing to the end. Do you know this is almost the first occasion in the history of India when a European policeman is asked to account for Indian lives? I have taken some interest in the question which I stirred up some time ago, I believe in February 1921, in the Council of State. I have cause, therefore, to appreciate your difficulty, and before the episode is over, to wish a giant's strength to your elbow. All honour to His Highness who, I hear, will back you up.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Sir P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR

BOMBAY

23rd November 1926

Dear Friend

I have a very affectionate letter from you. Thanks. After two days at the Viceregal Lodge and half a day at the Sabarmati Asram, I came here yesterday—to receive a send-off at a public meeting under the auspices of Mr. Jinnah. Sir D'Arey Lyndsay landed yesterday and came to the meeting. It was a great success: in fact I've rarely seen so good a gathering nor heard so many good speeches in three-fourths of an hour. At night I was entertained at dinner by Sir Victor Sassoon. Here too we had good company, good food and good speaking.

Mr Gandhi is not hopeful, though he thinks the signs are better than they have been for a long time. He dis-

trusts the whole repatriation business, and would have us be very careful how we touch it. The Viceroy and Bore are hopeful and say that Andrews bids them be so. In fact I find they all think well of Hertzog personally. I have the most faith in the judgement of Corbett: even he indulges in hope, though more moderately than the rest. I feel greatly helped by your views, lucid and balanced as they always are.

With most affectionate regards

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Sir P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR

DELHI

24th February 1927

Dear Friend

Reading your opinion in the paper of the South African settlement, I was reminded of your letter of welcome, which I haven't yet acknowledged. I am exceedingly sorry. In my desire to thank you in a full and suitably-worded letter, I put it off for the moment and then forgot it altogether. Pray forgive me. I daresay you know, even if not from personal experience, that people sometimes make such mistakes.

Your letter was so affectionate and brotherly that my forgetfulness is all the more regrettable.

Though pressed, I declined to take my seat on a three-year tenure. I am here for the S. A. business and ostentatiously so, for I don't take part in the discussions or divisions.

Macphail raised a storm to-day. Speaking on Railway working men's grievances, he asked what Brahmans who were Mirasdars paid to their peasants and indulged in a fling at low-paid clerky positions which Brahmana youth hankered after. It struck me his tone was offensive. . . . took up the challenge and still is in possession. Of course he talks nonsense. And more wish to speak . . . may join. I am told he does very badly.

Before I meet you about the end of the month, for we are both Senators now, I trust your amazing thirst for information regarding the Capetown Settlement will have been slaked. *The Boer Ministry have changed their hearts.* That is my principal answer to your interrogatories.

It is colder now than I can bear, and I long to get away. I leave on the 1st March after the debate, and spend two days in Lucknow, a day in Bombay and a day in Poona. I hope to be in Bangalore on the 8th.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Sir P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR

DELHI

27th February 1927

Dear Friend

I read your fine speech on the Gokhale day with appreciation and gratitude. Your good taste and correctitude



give your utterances a quality of satisfyingness, excuse the harsh coinage, which one rarely meets with in these days.

The resolution on South Africa, which Lajpatrai had tabled, has been withdrawn. S. Srinivasa Aiyangar threatened opposition, and the Lalaji funkcd. Jinnah, whose mind was not made up as to the character of the settlement,<sup>1</sup> suggested the course of negation, and the suggestion prevailed.

So I am like one who need not have been. Bhore tells me some Swarajist chaps shelter themselves under your example. "If even *he* has so many doubts and misgivings, how can we be expected to bless the thing?"

The Railway Budget has met some rough weather. But it is nothing to the fierce storm which is about to burst over the ratio question. I shall watch it from Basavan-gudi—not with indifference, but with complete dispassion. My presidentship of the Currency League, believe me, leaves me without prepossession. The Homeric combat, however, between Blackett and Purushotamdas, excites me to a degree. P. is not without hope. He says events are telling in his favour. I don't know. It is curious I don't try to know, for I have a feeling that I can't hereafter acquire enough knowledge to form an independent opinion. One can only lean on the side where one's previous experience leads one to believe the soundest knowledge and patriotism lie. I have no doubt Blackett knows more, but does he put India's interest above Britain's? I can't trust.

1 The Capetown Agreement.

Ignorance and prejudice are not guides to judgement. So I don't presume to judge. Looking into my mind, however, I can't be blind to a *bias*. And let me confess it is pretty strong.

I am being candid with you and expect pity, not ridicule.

Yours affectionately as ever

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Sir P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR

BANGALORE CITY

16th March 1927

Dear Friend

This is the fourth public panegyric<sup>1</sup> that you have pronounced on me. Shall I confess it? I shall do well to

1 Sir P. S. Sivaswami Aiyar made a speech on March 15, 1927 requesting His Excellency Lord Goschen to unveil the portrait of the Rt. Hon'ble Mr Sastri at the Senate House, Madras. We quote below some passages from his speech:

It is said that a prophet is not honoured in his own country but it would be perhaps truer to say that a prophet is finally honoured in his own country. Mr Sastri had acquired a world-wide fame before we decided upon this memorial. What is the secret of this world-wide fame and what are his claims and distinctions? Claims to admiration and gratitude on the part of one's countrymen are not built up by natural gifts alone or by character alone or by achievements alone. It is the combination of these that constitutes a genuine title to greatness and remembrance. Disinterested public service and self-sacrifice have always appealed to the people. Mr Sastri has recently related the story of his admission to the Servants of

die to-day—that is my feeling. How can I live up to the character that you have given me?

Utterly and irredeemably yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Sir P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR

BOMBAY

8th June 1927

Dear Friend

Your affectionate letter. People say there is no growth

India Society. Every member of that Society is bound to take seven vows and no one has fulfilled those vows in the letter and in the spirit more than Mr Sastri. India has always been first in his thoughts; he has given to her service the best in him; he has sought no personal advantage and has worked for the advancement of the whole nation without distinction of caste and creed. In founding the Servants of India Society, it was the aim of Gokhale to spiritualise public life. The members of the Society have to fill their hearts with the love of the country, so that all else shall appear as of little moment by its side. They have to be animated by fervent patriotism which rejoices at every opportunity of sacrifice for the Motherland and they have to possess a dauntless heart, which refuses to be turned from its object by difficulty or danger. Try him by any of these tests and you will find that Mr Sastri has wholeheartedly and joyfully fulfilled these conditions of his order. As a member of the Provincial Council, as a member of the old Imperial Council, as a member of the Reformed Legislature, as a platform speaker and as a politician, Mr Sastri has always striven to elevate the tone of public discussion. He has never been a politician in the vulgar sense of the term, but a politician versed in the science of politics and in constitutional history, ready to appreciate facts in their full significance and realise the responsibility of a legislator. His judgement of men has

after a certain age. But your wisdom increases daily, and your power of instruction.

always been generous and just and his opinions are generally the result of mature reflection and well-balanced judgement. It is not necessary for me to dwell on the purity and simplicity of his private life, his capacity for friendship, his sweetness of disposition, charming manner and dignity of temper and conduct which have endeared him to all who have had the privilege of friendship or even contact.

It might perhaps be more pertinent to refer to his gifts of chaste and mellifluous oratory, which have been unsurpassed in this generation in India and perhaps equalled by not more than a few even in the wider English-speaking world and which have been the envy of many a cultured Englishman. It has been his good fortune and his privilege to plead the cause of India in the Imperial Conference, in the League of Nations and in the International Conference at Washington. It has been his privilege to plead the cause of India in all the Dominions of the Commonwealth. His voice may be truly said to have been raised on behalf of India in the parliament of man and the federation of the world. To whichever country he has been sent on a mission, he has succeeded in inspiring the people with high respect and admiration for the capacity and culture of Indians and in winning sympathy for the Indian point of view.

If I were asked to specify the most valuable service among many, which Mr Sastri has rendered during his public life, I should unhesitatingly refer to the service he has conferred upon us by raising the esteem in which the educated Indian is held in the civilised world. . . . Let us hope that this memorial to one of our worthiest and most enlightened patriots may serve to place before future generations of young men the example of an unselfish life devoted to noble aims and service of the country, and ideals of sincerity and purity in private and public relations and of the high culture and scholarship and models of oratory fit to take their place with the best specimens in the English language.'

I shall be lucky to retain your goodwill and love when I return<sup>1</sup>—and after.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To HIS BROTHER V. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

DURBAN

15th July 1927

My dear Ramaswami

Durban is the hardest nut to crack. But I must try my teeth on it to-morrow. The Governor-General is here and will see me privately to-morrow. An unusually large attendance of Europeans is expected at to-morrow's function. The Congress office is flooded with applications for tickets made in person—a circumstance so unprecedented the Secretary is proud. One of the most wealthy and influential merchants Sir Charles Smith came to see me here to-day. He was requested to speak but would give no answer until he had seen me. Several South African Party leaders warned him against acceptance. But after hearing me he said nothing would stop him but he must attend and speak. I hear he is a great catch. I am awfully nervous and excited. I trust I shan't make a mess of it.

Dr Malan was markedly kind and courteous. So was his wife. I've had a very important talk with him. The

1 From South Africa.

bother is, he is powerless in Natal and has asked me to prepare the ground! I have to see the rabid anti-Indians and mollify them if possible. I am living in the house of a Mohammedan merchant in one of the best localities but I find my own food having engaged three servants. To this house I must ask Europeans. Will they come? So I am casting my net warily—Indians I am first disposing of—a few for each meal.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO HIS BROTHER V. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

DURBAN

29th August 1927

My dear Ramaswami

Numerous engagements worry me here, but it must be so in the beginning. In ten days I shall return to Pretoria and take rest. My car will have come by the time and I shall be able to drive about and enjoy myself.

The Administrator of Natal, Sir George Plowman, lunched at the Governor-General's table along with me, and the three of us then sat apart and discussed the Indian question. Sir George undertook definitely to persuade the Executive Council to appoint the Education Commission. He also said that it is just because I am Agent things will move on, else nothing would be done. Don't publish this, please.

I had a day and a half at Phoenix, a perfectly restful place. Manilal Gandhi and his wife were most cordial and respectful.

The Mayor is giving me a lunch to-day at the Durban Club—a marked honour. The Administrator will come and the two local Editors also. The Editor of the *Mercury* has apologised to me for the shabby report of my speech. Sir Charles Smith, a leading merchant, is printing my speech and circulating it at his own cost. I am being lionized by the Indian community. It will get to my head, I fear, and I shall become hopelessly 'spoilt.' Yesterday I went to Escombe—a very anti-Asiatic centre. About 150 Europeans came. I spoke deliberately and with effort (heart pain had come). A pestilential fellow, Commander Hein, made a venomous attack on our people, while being full of respect for me personally. It made me very unhappy. He called us a cancer on the fair body of Natal!

Affectionately Yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO HIS BROTHER V. S. RAMASWAMI SASTRI

RONDEBOSCH

24th February 1928

My dear Ramaswami

Your letter will perhaps come to-morrow. Meanwhile I must write mine.

*Reuter* has no doubt told you of the important events here. Everyone is asking about *Mother India* and the Simon Commission. Most people are unable to appreciate the boycott. The Boers, however, like the idea. Only, General Smuts and I had a long altercation about it. He talks like an Anglo-Indian. This was when I went to invite him to my dinner<sup>1</sup> of the 21st. He declined. I knew he would and was not sorry. But he at once started criticising the boycott move. I argued warmly against him but made no impression. The idea that Sapru leads the boycott may have something to do with the vehemence of his denunciation.

On the 29th I return to Maritzburg. The Education Commission hasn't begun yet. I wonder when it will—perhaps on Monday the 5th March.

The enclosures will interest you and give an idea of how I am getting on.

My health continues satisfactory. Everybody compliments me on my appearance; I am distinctly fatter than before. The climate, the general cheerfulness of the work, and the fruit-food combine to do me good.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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1 To celebrate the anniversary of the Cape Town Agreement.



DURBAN

10th March 1928

My dear Gundappa,

Thanks for a very kind and very interesting letter.

I approve (confidential, please) of the boycott<sup>1</sup> no doubt, but not for the reason that it would benefit us. It might conceivably hurt our cause. Still it is the natural reaction to the British insult, and if repressed, will invite more. I won't generalise altogether and say *all* our natural reactions must find vent. Far from it. But insult must be repelled. We have arrived at the stage proper to it. However, it is possible to hold the other view and be patriotic! I am no bigot, as you know. But hartal, etc.—no, never.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO SIR MUHAMMAD HABIBULLAH

483, CURRIE ROAD.

DURBAN

30th June 1928

*Private*

Dear Brother

In a former letter I have addressed you at some length on the subject of choosing a certain number of graduates

1 Of the Simon Commission. Mr Sastri did not give public expression to his views lest their publication should hinder his work as Agent in South Africa.

and under-graduates of distinction from the Education Service for staffing the Training College and High School to be started in Durban. It came nearly to my having to cancel this request. The Acting Superintendent of Education, Dr Loram, whom I have already introduced to you, has been busy trying to upset this feature of my scheme. His grounds for this action are many: he is himself a pronounced anti-Indian though he does not admit the fact. He believes that Indians are no better than the natives of the country and should, anyhow, not be treated as though they were better: the education given to the natives is good enough, in his judgement, for the Indian: the kind of training that the native teacher receives is good enough for our teachers: why should they be of higher status educationally or professionally than the ordinary native teacher? Besides, the Indian graduate is a book-worm and is notoriously deficient in practical good sense: he is also under the influence of Swaraj ideals and is likely to lead the Indian youth of this land into revolutionary political activity! Dr Loram would, furthermore, make the curriculum of Indian schools approximate to the native curriculum and include Indian history, Indian vernaculars and a knowledge of Indian geography for the purpose—strange as it may seem from such a person—of fitting these Indian youths for life in India, for one day they will all have to go back,—Colonial-born as well as Home-born. This last extravagance he has since dropped, but to the other points he holds fast. I understand he has spoken to Indian teachers, to European teachers and even to the pupils of the present Carlisle St. Secondary School telling them how I am proposing to take the bread out of the mouths of a number

of white people: how I shall introduce a number of Brahmin teachers consumed with caste arrogance: how I am bent upon getting jobs for some pals of mine, and how, instead of enabling Indian youths to proceed to England and become doctors and barristers, I shall hereafter confine them to the profession of teaching in primary schools! Dr Loram interviewed the Natal Executive and got them to set aside the unanimous recommendation of the Education Commission, of which they themselves were part, and turn down my proposal to introduce teachers from India. At my request the Administrator was good enough to arrange for my interviewing the Executive on the subject. This came off last Monday: I held them for half an hour: they turned round to my view for the reason, as Mr Dyson explained, that in spite of Dr Loram's efforts, he had not been able to put together the necessary staff from among Europeans. There, for the moment, the matter rests. My opponent, however, is a man of resource and will not be beaten easily. I hope, however, that I shall win through.

This makes it all the more necessary that your selection must be of the very best quality, for the work of the men that come over will be watched narrowly and jealously, and, if Dr Loram continues, unsympathetically as well. I shall write again in more precise terms when the Superintendent and I have settled on the number, grade, qualifications, terms, etc., of the teachers to be imported. One thing, however, I will say now to meet the criticism that our men might be of the extremist variety in politics. I have had to undertake that they will all be selected from the Educational Service in India and men therefore, with a future career which they would not lightly risk.

I do hope with all my heart that men of this type will be found in the lower ranks of Government service.

Mr Kichlu and Miss Gordon, leave to-morrow night. They have done very well. Kichlu's Memorandum, of which copies have already been sent to you, is looked upon here as a document of much value which will long serve as a paper of reference, reliable and thorough. The Memorandum regarding the Transvaal education of Indians is rather thin but quite useful, and, according to the wish of the Administrator of the Province, will not be published either here or in India.

Mr. Kichlu has been in close touch with me throughout this inquiry and I share the views and sentiments expressed in the memoranda. As I have already written to you, they have been kept here an unconscionable length of time but that is owing to circumstances beyond their control. I would add that their work here does them full credit and, if I may venture to do so, I would request you to commend them for recognition in the appropriate manner by the Government of India.

The judgement of the Supreme Court of the Union in the two cases, one of Medh and the other of Daya Purshotam, have been delivered. Medh has won his case, that is to say, the Minister of the Interior will not have the power of restricting or limiting the status of exempted entrants. In the other case Government has won and section 5 will have retrospective effect, so that the condonation Scheme becomes necessary and the objections of the malcontents fall to the ground. One or two wild fellows are talking of an appeal to the Privy Council, but of course this is mere folly.

While dictating this letter I received yours of the 21st May: many thanks. I see you speculate on the kind of representation which Indians may get. Smuts and Hertzog have not followed up their high-flown sentiments. It would be idle to base hopes on such talk.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To SIR MUHAMMAD HABIBULLAH

DURBAN: NATAL

25th August 1928

*Private*

Dear Brother<sup>1</sup>

I forward a cutting of the "Natal Mercury" of this morning. It is an account of the ceremony performed by the Administrator yesterday in laying the foundation stone.<sup>2</sup> The attendance of Europeans was both large and distinguished. We gave a tea to them afterwards, which was highly appreciated.

Last night we had another meeting of the Joint Council for the purpose of enrolling members and making rules. Some of the Europeans are very earnest. If only a few

1 While voyaging together to South Africa for the Cape Town Conference Mr Sastri discovered the remarkable coincidence that he and Habibullah were born almost at the same time—early morning on 22nd September 1869. From then they always addressed each other as brothers.

2 Of Sastri College, Durban.

people on our side respond, I see in it the nucleus of what may prove on occasion a strong bulwark. As usual our fellows are either indifferent or puzzled: one or two are even suspicious.

Have I told you of the new Mayor? He is a Mr Eaton and avows himself an anti-Asiatic. I went somewhat out of my way to call on him and his wife. The result is that he complains of being disarmed! He seems inclined now to be friendly and accepts our invitations, though he protests somewhat ostentatiously that he believes still in our developing our own civilization and our own government in our own locality. He presided the other day over the first anniversary of our Social Service League, which, by the way, has done useful and creditable work. We had much good-humoured banter and, on the whole, the Mayor was drawn closer to us. He came yesterday with his wife to the foundation stone ceremony, and I took care to gratify him by placing him at the high table next to the Administrator. To-morrow he will join us at luncheon at the Orient Club and attend a presentation function in honour of Mr Young, Editor of the "Natal Witness." In September the Gandhi Library will celebrate its anniversary and the Mayor has agreed to preside. If not spoiled by overdoing, this will be a minor conquest to the credit of the community.

In another unexpected way I am about to earn notoriety. At the instance of the curator of a small zoo here, I requested His Highness the Maharaja of Mysore to present a young she-elephant. He agreed. The Town Council have sanctioned, I hear, the necessary expense, and if the matter goes through, as I hope it will, it may make some people think of India in a friendly way.

TO SIR MUHAMMAD HABIBULLAH

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The malcontents in Cape Town have not quietened. Their latest move is indicated in the printed notice which I enclose. They will probably pass a resolution condemning me and the Congress. Let them.

On the 27th we propose to leave for Johannesburg, and spend three weeks in the Transvaal. After that I propose to take a short holiday during which I shall visit the Victoria Falls. On the 3rd or 4th October I shall be back in the province to meet Mr Bryan, the permanent Superintendent of Education, who will have returned. Many matters wait for me to fix up with him.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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OFFER AND REFUSAL OF K.C.S.I.

From SIR MUHAMMAD HABIBULLAH

To SASTRI

SIMLA

20th October 1928

*Secret*

My dear Sastri

I am venturing to write to you on a matter which has been engaging my attention for some weeks past. Now that you have made an irrevocable decision to terminate your invaluable work in South Africa, much to the regret of all, it seems to me that it will savour of lack of appreciation on the part of the Government of India, particularly at a time when I am connected with it as Member in charge of the Department of Indians Overseas, to allow

you to leave us without an outward token of our appreciation of your meritorious services as Agent to the Government of India. I am aware that no distinction can be too great for one possessing your dignity and eminence, and no title commensurate with your unselfish and inimitable labours in the field in which you are now engaged. I am equally aware that "service to humanity" is the life-blood of your existence and the motto of your life. But let me assure you, my dear Sastri, that I cannot be happy until I shall have discharged my duty in this respect. If, as I fervently hope, you are prepared to fall in with my ideas, I shall submit your name for the award of a K.C.S.I. in the next year's Honours List as a token, though feeble and inadequate, of your noble work in the cause of our motherland. I shall deem it a personal favour if you will be so good as to send me a cable expressing your agreement with my suggestion.

Thanking you in anticipation,

I remain,

Yours affectionately

MUHAMMAD HABIBULLAH

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FOLLOWING FOR HABIBULLAH FROM SASTRI

30th November 1928

DURBAN

*Secret*

Your secret letter of October 22nd came only yesterday. Trust the delay causes no serious inconvenience. Words fail me to express how flattered and gratified I feel by



your offer and by the most affectionate terms in which you make it. Believe me the approbation of friends, especially the Viceroy and yourself, is ample reward for such service as I have been privileged to do. I recognise the very high distinction proposed for me; but I cannot overcome the feeling that it is somewhat out of the range of one who occupies a humble station in life. In communicating my wish to remain undistinguished may I beg respectfully that my motive be not misunderstood?

SASTRI

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To Mr G. A. NATESAN

UNION CASTLE LINE

R.M.S. "WINDSOR CASTLE"

18th November 1928

*Private*

My dear Natesan

I am getting back to Durban after strenuous campaign in Cape Town. My lectures, P. S. S. will be happy to know, have created an appreciation of Indian philosophy and literature, besides adding to my personal reputation.

In a few days I shall go round the country again, taking final leave of people. I expect Sir Kurma here on the 9th January, and I shall sail on the 14th.

How I look forward to the reunion with family and friends! One is scarcely better than a child in these primary matters.

It is not yet time to look back on my work here. But I can't help feeling I have vindicated your choice. You needn't blush for me.

Europeans keep on pressing me hard to stay. They find it hard to believe India will send a good man a second time. You will get an idea of it when I say that the Vice-Chancellor of the Cape Town University called me 'Master' with the loud approbation of an enthusiastic audience, and I am hailed generally as a wise man from the East from whom South African statesmen may learn a good deal.

Please keep this to yourself. It would raise a sneer in some quarters.

Love to all.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To SIR P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR

BASAVANGUDI

19th September 1929

Dear Friend

I am agreeable to your suggestion that I should spend a few days in Madras before I finally leave this side.

In no conceivable circumstances shall I join N.C.O., become a law-breaker, wear Khaddar or assume membership of the Congress. Should the revised Constitution be no real advance with Assembly powers curtailed, Dominion Status disavowed, or the British hold tightened, I may denounce it and seek the retirement which you once before recommended to me. Leading an agitation or

waving red flags and shouting war-cries—is not in my line. Martyrdom must come to me, if at all, in other forms.

It is easy to ask for constructive proposals. One idea I have—not perhaps constructive—neither the Hindu-Moslem problem nor the States trouble is ever going to be solved now. Only a partial adjustment is feasible, some makeshift to which the parties give half-hearted (but newspaper-boomed) assent. Even this partial adjustment is possible only with the consent (half-hearted and quarter-hearted) of the Government. It is the merest pretence and the nakedest charlatanry to talk of self-determination or spontaneous concordats. Let us all sit round a table, as round as you can get. But at some stage or other, when issues are decided, let the Government man be there.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO SIR P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR

BASAVANGUDI

2nd December 1929

Dear Friend

Many thanks for your kind letter.

Yes, rest is doing me good. There is drugging besides. Only I have not yet discovered the diet that suits me. One thing is clear—there must be as little of it as possible.

I meant earnestly to speak as Chairman and break the long silence which has so annoyed Chintamani and Sapru.

But I promised the doctors (there were two sat on me in Bombay) *not* to attempt a big speech during the rest; they had this particular engagement in view.

Sethna's idea didn't appeal to me at all. Speak or forbear.

I could not meet the Viceroy even once, being ill during most of the Delhi stay. Sapru did and changed his opinion of him utterly. Chintamani did likewise. Patel seems to have become a confederate, to judge from the warmth of his propaganda!

Some surprises have come on me in politics. This Conference-to-be may prove one. I hope so devoutly. But it has many obstacles to success. The next Congress session may raise one. I don't like the tone of Jawaharlal Nehru's Nagpur address. It contains a hint of coming truculence. Gandhi may prove powerless to resist the young bloods. I meant to help him in that great task by joining the Delhi manifesto. I thought he was genuinely struggling on our side. Now, however, a doubt has begun to cross my mind. Is he not after all thirsting for a great opportunity for his mighty weapon? He told me in so many words, G. A. Natesan listening, that he would not be sorry if this Conference fell through. He seemed to fear it would side-track his movement and delay it. But as the Viceroy's effort was sincere, it appealed to his sense of honour and chivalry, and he *had* to meet it in like spirit. But as to result, he thought it an inconvenience, if not an impediment. If this be the correct reading of his mind, I fear he may yield to the intransigents.

Motilal Nehru, strong now in combination with Gandhi against his son, will in the end (so I think) be overcome

by his paternal affection. Neither he nor Sapru has an adequate idea of the strength of the Hindu Mahasabha, and they have openly declared in favour of the creation of a line of Moslem frontier provinces and the grant of a third of the Assembly's strength to that community. They will find it hard to carry the Mahasabha so far. For the chances of political manœuvre will all tell in the direction of Moslem demands. They will get what Sapru is willing to concede *plus* what he is not willing to concede, *viz.*, separate electorates. The Europeans in India will see to the latter point. Added to this, we have inherited from the old Congress constitution a clause giving to minorities a practical veto over what they may choose to regard as affecting their social or religious institutions. This cannot but lead to the enthronement of the Mohammedan community in a position of indisputable advantage. In the craze for Dominion Status here and now, those who are commonly looked upon as our spokesmen are willing to accept it subject to so many undesirable conditions that posterity will have every reason to curse this generation. Mr Jayakar is emphatically in agreement with this view. So is Malaviya, or at least was, when I accused him of two cardinal weaknesses, one towards the Maharajas and one towards the Mohammedans. You must have seen the energy with which he cleared himself of the latter. Of the former he said nothing. . . . With Bengal I have been some time out of touch; and I can't gauge the Hindu-Moslem feeling. But I shouldn't wonder if it was the same, tho' less strongly, as in the U.P. To sum up, it won't be easy for the Congress view to prevail at the London Conference.

It is this fear which lies behind the suggestion that at a preliminary conference to be held in India, a concordat should be arrived at between the leaders on both sides. I heard much in Bombay of a proposal that this attempt should be made after the Viceroy issued his invitations to the London conference. The obvious objection to the proposal is that we should summon to the preliminary conference *all* the Hindu and *all* the Mohammedans in the Viceroy's list. Else the misunderstandings caused by a selection would make the peace-attempt an absolute futility. I should have the attempt made *before* the Viceroy nominated anyone. We could then without offence ask a few 'likely' representatives to meet and talk things over. Not that I am sanguine to the results even then. Men would be afraid to concede anything and rather than incur odium, would separate, leaving things exactly as they were. If they were courageous and actually negotiated as plenipotentiaries, they must undertake a big educative propaganda in favour of the compromise. I don't see many such strong men. For it is certain that, to reach an even tolerably stable compromise, many concessions which appear disastrous in the closet must be made. Perhaps far more by the Hindus than by the other side.

All the forces that we can appraise point to pessimism. I suppose as in religion the only faith which is useful is a faith which is independent of reason. Trust in Providence has among its progeny a vague trust in the destiny of one's country.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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LONDON

29th May 1930

My dear Kodanda Rao

Benn is really good and strong. But in the Cabinet he is not as influential as Snowden or Thomas or Henderson. He is only a 'renegade' from the Liberal camp, and not altogether free yet from the jealousy and suspicion of the ambitious and disappointed labour members. If he got strong support from the Indian Press, it might be an advantage. But he has only cold water though not, thank God, utter repudiation. In India we are apt to forget that even these Secretaries are human and look for some encouragement. Montagu was attacked and slandered by our own people. Benn should be lucky to escape that fate. In your own small way you must be aware of the despair coming on you when critics fall on you, and friends look on pityingly, half-deprecatingly, but give no active succour. I say to you, go on, you are right: people will come to see it in time.

Prof Radhakrishnan is doing very well. We should be proud of him.

Chatterjee is going soon to Geneva. He promises to support Raghunatha Rao's candidature. I notice with satisfaction that Benn is a warm admirer of Chatterjee and takes advice from him.

The R. T. C. is our only hope. If we pretend to despise it in advance or make a hash of it here, we are done for a long time. We are all pressing for an amnesty and decla-

ration (both). But it is *impossible* before the Simon report is published.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr D. V. GUNDAPPA

BEXHILL-ON-SEA

15th October 1930

My dear Gundappa

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I am no more hopeful of the R. T. C. than you are. But one has got to go through it as though one had full faith. That is the inner meaning of Gokhale's teaching: "We must serve through our failures, more fortunate people may serve through their successes." The doctor may give up hope. But the dying person must be looked after and fed with the most tender care. The relations can't shut up the house and move elsewhere!

And you err to think the worst enemy of India is the British die-hard. There is not much to choose between him and the Indian sectarian.

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Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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DELHI

23rd February 1931

My dear Gundappa

तुल्यनिन्दास्तुतिर्मौनी

Do you remember 'Tulya ninda stutir mauni,'<sup>1</sup> etc.

Very difficult; why, impossible. But I have always thought that one should aim at it. The human heart yearns for praise and dreads blame. One has to fight nature. Any success you get is impermanent. A change of place or circumstance brings up the frailty and aggravates it. To one in public life, especially in Indian public life, the discipline is essential. Praise and blame are the merest distractions. They make you lose sight of the real thing you seek. My London experience this time has taught me much in this line. I haven't become callous; I am too human for that. But I believe the verdict I hear all round makes no longer the old appeal. Distinct gain, tho' it comes rather late in the day. I haven't long to profit by it or improve upon it.

There then I've been sermonising. But you have drawn it on yourself.

Mirza did well. He wasn't cowed down by Bikaner. He never lost sight of his own viewpoints. He maintained his equanimity. His speeches were clear, brief, emphatic and believe me, sound and patriotic. I love him more than ever. But what is it to him?

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1 Indifferent to blame and to praise; without speech, etc., etc.

Gandhi seems in conciliatory mood. Irwin has touched his heart. I prepared each for the other and feel rewarded. They say his influence over the Congress Working Committee is supreme and will prevail over Jawaharlal and others. It looks so. Events make it necessary for him to seek peace. True he lays down difficult conditions. For a wonder, Irwin is willing patiently to discuss every single point, allow for the natural weaknesses of Congressmen and meet the demand as far as possible. In some cases his response far exceeds my expectation. So there is hope.

Abhyankar is here. He reports Gandhi as partially willing to press the subjects' case before the Princes. From him it will be taken as well-meant advice, not as insolent intrusion.

Yours very affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr D. V. GUNDAPPA

MYLAPORE

11th April 1931

My dear Gundappa

You must have realised with painful vividity the warping pressure of politics on our intimate personal attitudes, *i.e.* on our souls. I have rebelled, and thank God I have not ceased to rebel, against it, though I am conscious and take shame that I have now and then partially succumbed. My retirement, if I live to achieve it, is not distant. I am anxious and, so far as an old man has a will, am determined, not to allow the public distemper, however strong, to infect my soul.

Don't, dear G., allow life's values, arrived at naturally and in detachment, to be altered, especially to the disadvantage of parties, by extraneous influences, however seductively garbed in the guise of patriotism. In the eye of God, humanity is one and knows no division of sex, race or political boundary.

What a platitude I have lighted on, but how unavoidably!

Give my love to friends, and remember Kensington Palace Mansions W. 8.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO PANDIT HIRDAY NATH KUNZRU

KENSINGTON PALACE MANSIONS W-8

3rd July 1931

My dear Hariji

A second letter has come from you full of interest. Thanks many and many again. You don't expect me to fight you, do you? It is not my nature. I hate contention and competition. *Mea culpa* is my motto.

My colleagues gently censure me for lack of firmness. Perhaps the charge is true. I will make this plea though. My weakness only damaged my personal reputation; it did no harm to the public interest. Sapru was easily the most influential and able of us all; and aggressive though

he was towards his liberal colleagues generally, there never was a question of his patriotism or unselfishness. Why weaken his hands? So I reasoned and kept a back seat.

Now and then I differed with him and said so.

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Here let me state what seems to be a fundamental difference of standpoint. Some persons would cap their criticism by complete dissociation and refuse to share responsibility for a scheme in which they saw glaring defects. I am no less keen in finding fault, but in cases of cardinal importance I cannot bring myself to stand out and say I disown it all. The need of a settlement today is paramount, the Round Table Conference is at work for the purpose. I take a full share in the discussion and in the shaping of the plan. Unless the result is something fantastically absurd or unworkable, I think it my duty to stand by it. And it will need some strong and unflinching support, if it is to save the situation.

Don't mistake me, please. I admit nearly all your criticism. It is not too late to rectify some of the defects. Let us try our best to improve the scheme. When we have done our best, a keen eye will detect serious flaws. That however, should not cause us to abandon the child and run away.

One last word. I am aware of the drift in the Society. In me some of you are disappointed. Occasionally you have had to hang down your heads in humiliation at my doings and sayings. That you have borne with me so long is eloquent testimony to the generosity of your nature. I am full of gratitude for the brotherly love and

kindness which I have received and ask for a continuance of the same treatment for yet awhile. Pray do not look too closely into my deserts.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

P.S.—May I ask that copies of this letter be sent to all Members?

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To Mr H. S. L. POLAK

MYLAPORE

14th April 1932

My dear Polak

As you are a member of an agency for international peace, may I ask you and your colleagues to intervene on behalf of India? Her unfortunate people are going through sufferings which it is hard to describe. Between the Civil Disobedience movement of the Indian National Congress and the policy of harshness and cruelty adopted in reply by the Government, the future of the country is in serious peril. One sometimes wonders whether revolution could be avoided. I will not go so far as to say that Ordinances are not required or that the ordinary procedure of law is adequate to cope with the disorder. But surely the situation is not desperate everywhere in the country, and Government is not wise to spread the area of disaffection. The use of *lathis* on women and young persons generally, which it would be difficult in any country to keep within bounds, and which in this country must lead to barbarities, is certain, even after the end of the present trouble, to leave racial and communal bitterness behind, which will baffle statesmen for a whole generation. Nor

can it be said that the comparative quiet brought about by repression is being used to push forward the work of political reconstruction with vigour, clear vision or coherence of aim. Reaction in every shape and form is gathering itself together to gain sinister advantage; and every party, every interest and every community is raising its price for agreeing to the common settlement at the expense of the future Indian nation and to the detriment of Dominion Status, which still is the recognised goal. It must not be forgotten that for any settlement to be satisfactory or reasonably stable, the *conditio sine qua non* is that laid down by Lord Irwin with the consent of the Labour Government—that only so much deduction should be made from Dominion Status and powers as is absolutely necessary in the interests of India. Not all the safeguards and reservations at present contemplated by authority are free from the suspicion of being designed for the benefit of non-Indian interests. Moreover, projects for the postponement of responsibility at the centre are being engineered under influential auspices—the air is full of most disquieting rumours—projects which go clearly against official declarations frequently made, and which cannot be made to operate except by unabashed and flagrant application of the doctrine *divide et impera*. Not to mince matters, even the politicians here friendly to the British connection are full of the misgiving that the present ascendancy of conservatism in England may destroy the work of the Round Table Conference by seeking to further its own ends, which, however legitimate and conformable to its tradition, are likely to antagonise and even inflame the nationalistic forces of India, which the recent Labour Government endeavoured to understand, satisfy and guide

into safe channels. In other words, the settlement which may be effected in the present regime will be too much like the peace of Versailles,—in the interests of but a part of those concerned and calculated to create new and greater problems than before and endanger the British Commonwealth. History proclaims that the genius of British conservatism is to extend British power and British domination without excessive care for the feelings and interests of alien peoples, and that it may not be trusted to foster the growth of political freedom among the races and nations of the world.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE Mr RAMSAY MACDONALD

MADRAS

15th April 1932

*Confidential*

My dear Prime Minister<sup>1</sup>

I avail myself for the first time of the privilege you gave me to write to you with freedom upon the state of things in India. Not being on any of the Committees, I am in a comparatively detached position, and my survey may be free from pre-possessions.

<sup>1</sup> Sending copies of this letter and the next, Mr Sastri wrote to a friend: "I put it pointedly, because I have to be brief. Between Government and our people, taking them roughly as opposed, I stand every time with the latter. The merits of a particular dispute may be here or there. I can't be Vibhishana:

In November last your Government acceded, though somewhat reluctantly, to the request made by a large section of the R. T. C. that the idea of giving autonomy to the provinces as a first step in reconstruction should be abandoned. We were reassured and flattered ourselves that the danger was past. When, however, in your final declaration on behalf of Government you read the sentence "It may be that opinion and circumstances will change and it is not necessary here and now to take any irrevocable decision" (P. 292: Report of the Plenary Sessions), a shiver passed through me; and when a few days later Sir John Simon enlarged upon it in the House of Commons I felt that the mischief had been done. What you meant as a way of escape in case of an unforeseen eventuality has been seized upon as a desirable turn of affairs which should be brought about. Opinion and circumstances are being made to change. It may not be an exaggeration to say to-day that in India the two contrasted views are about equally influential. Every day of delay tells in favour of the smaller step. We must remember, however, that this result is only apparent. The National Congress is temporarily put out of action so far as the circulation of opinion is concerned. There can be no doubt that that body will be almost to a man opposed

I'd rather be Bhishma. May be it is a narrow outlook.' Mr. Sastri's words remind us of Burke's famous saying: 'I am not one of those who think that the people are never in the wrong. They have been so, frequently and outrageously, both in other countries and in this. But I do say that, in all disputes between them and their rulers, the presumption is at least upon a par in favour of the people.' 'The people have no interest in disorder. When they do wrong, it is their error, and not their crime.'



to a scheme which postpones central responsibility and exposes it to the risks involved in postponement. You will not find it difficult to understand why the Mussalman community are as a whole indifferent to central responsibility, which, if it should include the Indian States, would leave them in a pronounced minority. For your private ear I may add that a powerful section of the British official element is throwing its weight on the side of provincial autonomy, and you know as well as anybody that official views have many ways of spreading themselves which are secret and can be neither checked nor countered. It would be a mistake to rely much on such an expedient as a declaration in the statute that central responsibility will follow when arrangements have been completed. Those that do not desire central responsibility will find or create a dozen reasons for not completing the necessary arrangements, and those who wish to implement the declaration will find it hard to surmount the active opposition of provincial leaders on whom autonomy has just been conferred. In my talks with high officials, I came frequently upon the idea that the interval between the smaller and the larger step must be sufficient to enable the provinces to find their feet and prove themselves fit to create and sustain a federal centre. This doubtless means that, so far as it lies in their power, they will not take the second step simply as a deferred part of a whole scheme of reform, but make it contingent upon their own tests of fitness. I am convinced that to bring one part of the scheme into operation in advance of the other is to endanger the whole. The followers of the Congress, who cannot be kept out of action indefinitely, will be strong enough to obstruct effectively the working of provincial.

autonomy; and if the Government of His Majesty is to be carried on it will have to be through the nearly exclusive agency of those minor communities whose claims are fully conceded. Expressions like Anglo-Muslim Raj were heard even while we were in England, and they seem now to be louder here. It is probable that some important sections of British opinion will not shrink from such a development. But you will be a sad man when you discover that your lifelong labours for the welfare of India have ended in the setting up of class against class and an application on a colossal scale of the principle of Divide and Rule.

The delay in the remoulding of political institutions is having another harmful effect. All interests and communities are stiffening their demands, and the Princes are no exception. In fact to reconcile the dissidents among them hopes are being given which it will be impossible to fulfil. As yet this danger has not become formidable, but in the uncertainties of the situation to-day any sinister turn may, not improbably, result in the ruling out of an all-India Federation. It would be by no means easy to destroy the work of the R. T. C. of the last two years and fall back upon a scheme of reforms for British India. Enemies of progress will have cause to rejoice that the Princes of India, by their dramatic entry into the political stage and their equally dramatic exit from it, have darkened counsel and covered the whole movement with confusion. You will be surprised to hear that some men in high authority express themselves as no friends of the Federation of All-India. You need not be unduly alarmed. I merely mention it to forewarn you.

You remember at a critical moment in the proceedings of the Minorities Sub-Committee in 1930 and at another equally critical moment in 1931, I implored you to make up your mind and impose a decision on us. On both occasions you agreed that there seemed no alternative. How I wish that you had acted accordingly! The Consultative Committee have no doubt placed the matter in your hands of their own accord. But I know the disposition among the various parties and do not envy you. Your decision is not going to be accepted as final. I hope such protests as may be made will not incommode the administration. But it is easy to be over-confident. You will not consider me presumptuous if I offer the suggestion that it might be well to instruct the Governors in some provinces like the Punjab that they must not be caught unawares when the communal decision is carried out.

In another sphere difficulties are thickening. The severities attending the measures that the various Governments take to put down the disruptive activities of the Congress have assumed grave proportions. You have enough experience of Indian executive methods to judge the actual incidence upon the people of all restrictive and repressive action. The Police in India, ill-educated, ill-paid, and drawn from low strata of society and accustomed to rough modes, when actually authorised and encouraged to strike persons in the streets, irrespective of station, age or sex, cannot be expected to restrain themselves. Stories of inhuman and barbarous chastisement go about, creating bitterness and racial and communal rancour. Believe me, there will be the very devil to pay for another generation. The world is learning to drop corporal punishment everywhere. Gaols, schools, and even homes have less and less

of it. The dignity of the human being as a human being, instead of being merely the Christian ideal, is getting to be realised as a fact in all relations of daily life. We may soon witness the complete abandonment of bodily violence as a means of discipline or even of revenge in the civilized world. What will then be said of a Government under whose explicit orders respectable men and women, performing what they consider to be duties of citizenship, could be dragged along the streets and beaten mercilessly? Is it any wonder that Government find themselves every now and then compelled to condone barbarities and to deny notorious facts? If a fiat went forth from Whitehall or Delhi that these things should stop, it would be long before the police really changed their ways and law and order came to be respected, and it would be very long indeed before the people forgot their sufferings and forgave the authors.

What do I wish done, you may well ask, I wish I could give you clear guidance. One thing I will venture to say, "Speed up, speed up." The slowest machinery in the world is the Government of India reforming itself. Ordinances and *lathis* can only have a short day. During that short day, the new order must be brought into being. I am not blind to your limitations. If all your associates and colleagues were friends of freedom and lovers of humanity like yourself, your task would still be far from easy. But among them there are many whose sympathies are narrow, whose political principles are harsh, and who wish, now the Congress has been brought under to some extent, to revive in full vigour the old imperial policy of domination and exploitation. In these conditions I turn round and round and see no friend except you. I wish

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God's grace to be poured on you in abundance to sustain you in the task which is as difficult as it is noble.

Yours very truly

V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI

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To THE RIGHT HONOURABLE Mr RAMSAY MACDONALD

MYLAPORE

6th May 1932

*Confidential*

My dear Prime Minister

I address you for the second time so soon after the first, because the statements about the situation in India made in Parliament by the Secretary of State indicate a degree of complacency on his part, which, to one on the spot, seems scarcely justified. My duty as Privy Councillor also constrains me to place my views before you, although those views are no better than misgivings and apprehensions. A friend of mine assures me that he is writing to the Secretary of State much to the same effect, and that is why I refrain from sending him the enclosed document and commenting upon it.

The document is an account of the doings of the police in Mangalore and the District of South Canara, which is signed by well-known citizens. I can vouch personally for the character and high standing in public life of many of them. If a public enquiry is refused and the Government of Madras deny the facts in the Legislative Council or by a press communique, the likelihood is that nine out of

ten intelligent persons would believe the version of the signatories without hesitation, the credit of Government has fallen so low.

I do not forget the difficulty of those that have to keep order. Non-violent civil disobedience is a novel method of agitation, and the public sympathy and attention which the agitators obtain put the authorities in an awkward predicament. The excessive number of the demonstrators and the quickness with which they are replaced are baffling in the extreme and make recourse to ordinary methods impotent. But there are remedies and remedies. The one that Government have chosen is open to the gravest objections. In the first place, it has not proved efficacious. To quench demonstration of discontent is neither to cure nor to disable it permanently. In the second place, it brutalises both police and public, and is calculated to poison the conditions of life for many years. If agitators undermine respect for the law, Government cannot restore it by defending and palliating breaches of it by its own agency. Once the use of *lathi*-force is sanctioned, it is impossible in the nature of things to restrain it within the limit of necessity. It is possible to get people in Westminster to believe that police excesses are the exception. The people here whose confidence and good-will matter and who have direct access to the facts cannot be so deceived. If Government desire to avoid public odium, they must abandon a method of which it is the inevitable consequence. I am not one of those who would deny to the Government extraordinary powers in extraordinary circumstances. But I cannot approve of a body like the Indian police being authorized to strike respectable people with *lathis* in the streets as though they

were cattle and dogs and their persons entitled to no respect. The use of physical violence in human relations is being confined within the narrowest possible limits, and the sentiment of civilized society revolts against barbarous usage even of animals. The Government of a great and ancient people must, even in the worst extremity hold themselves precluded from certain modes of punishing their criminals, let alone political demonstrators.

My argument may be pointed by a reference to the history of India. In the middle of the last century, a committee of three Europeans investigated the prevalence of torture in the province of Madras as a means of collecting land-revenue. The methods of the police came also under their review, and their report signed in 1855 may still be perused with profit for its fidelity to fact, its humanity and its exposition of the duties of Government. In passing orders soon after in a Bombay case, the Court of Directors referred to this weighty State paper and made the following observations:

“ It must be impressed upon the minds of our native officers, by a vigorous but judicious course of action, and by prompt and adequate punishment in cases of proved delinquency, that we are resolved . . . not to be always baffled in our endeavours to restrain their malpractices, and although we may console ourselves with the knowledge that our European servants are to an extent exempt from this reproach, we at the same time feel it difficult to believe that superintendents, like Lieutenant Bell in the papers before us, could not by a more strenuous vigilance and activity prevent the evil. Neither are we content to trust to the tardy check of the progress of education.

We had hoped that, after so long a period of European rule, it would not have been necessary to exculpate such offences against humanity by the poor plea that we derived them from our native predecessors. We have neglected a high duty if we have not better taught the natives whom we have subdued. The study from the school-master may slowly settle by degrees better principles of Government in the minds of the inhabitants, but in the meanwhile we must look to the sessions judge for peremptory and prompt punishment, and to your government for a vigorous tone and a public expression of your strong wish to uproot a practice which has excited disgust at home and given us discredit in Europe."

It would be an idle quibble to contend that this passage deals with torture employed by the police in the course of criminal trials. The public beating with strong weapons of respectable men and women who believe themselves to be employed in the assertion of citizen rights is an outrage of humanity, not less but more censurable than torture properly so-called. Torture was condemned in India by a solemn document eighty years ago. Thanks to the humane ideals and civilized standards steadily upheld by the British Government since that day, the police have almost forgotten it. How can Government revive this weapon of a barbarous age in dealing with agitators of whom some may be mercenary and annoying but most are patriotic and unresisting? Are Government really so bankrupt of resources?

There is a further melancholy reflection. The Torture Commission of 1855 comforted themselves to some extent with the thought that for the evil practices of the time



Europeans were not so responsible as the people of India. On this occasion no apologist of the British Government can draw on such a plea. The violent method of to-day is sanctioned by the highest authority, defended at every turn by high European officials, and in some cases actually administered by European policemen.

Yours very truly  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr P. KODANDA RAO

COIMBATORE

2nd July 1932

My dear Kodanda Rao

A telegram is unnecessary. Things are not going so quick. You are perhaps right. Sapru and Jayakar would have resigned by this time<sup>1</sup> if they acted on impulse. Now second thoughts will prevail. Second thoughts are always *prudent*.

It looks as though a conference of some sort will be held. Likely in Bombay Setalvad is arranging. I have promised to attend, provided health permits. I am now comparatively strong and may venture—let Joshi wait till then.

1 From the R. T. C.

If we had been together, I should have despatched a letter to the press in reply to Sir P. S. S. Even Benthall admitted the reaction from the tory side. We defeated it, thanks to the courage and pluck of Benn, Lees-Smith, and Pethwick-Lawrence. Hoare has since collected his forces and overpowered MacDonald and Sankey. It is all over now. No approach to Dominion Status—*Rule Britannia!*

Is it better to show resentment and resign and non-co-operate? The Tory majority is a hard fact on which we can make only a slight impression. It was last five years at least, may be ten. To non-co-operate is only to facilitate, why precipitate and consolidate the British *cum* minorities rule. This will provoke violent communal feuds and lead to frequent riots and bloodshed. You have seen, optimist as you are, how every political dispute ends, or can be made to end, in a Hindu-Moslem riot. Imagine what will happen if provincial autonomy is granted and four provinces under Muslim rule oppose central responsibility (or stipulate impossible conditions) while seven Hindu provinces wish to go ahead. As often as there is a serious matter in controversy in the all-India convention, meetings of the various communities will be held in the provinces.

Whatever we do, this is going to happen. So are the signs in India's political horoscope. Anyhow the progressives are few and ought not to sub-divide further. Let us follow Sapru and Jayakar.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

COIMBATORE

5th September 1932

My dear Kodanda Rao

I have been invited to be the Rhodes Memorial Lecturer in Oxford next year.<sup>1</sup> Sir Robert Borden, General Smuts and Prof. Einstein have been among the six previous lecturers. The fee is £500. I must reside one term from April onwards in Oxford and deliver not less than three lectures. 'India in history and to-day,' 'India and Britain,' 'Asia and Europe' are three suggestions made. The Rt. Hon'ble H. A. L. Fisher signs the letter.

It is an exceedingly great honour. Please consult our good friends and tell me whether I shall accept. Health, I fear, forbids. Supposing I lived to prepare the lectures, the thought of having to get up and speak before the most learned audience in the world would kill me!

I fear I must be content with the honour of having been offered it.

I don't want it to get into the press yet.

Yours very affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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1 In the event Mr Sastri declined the honour. Later, it was offered again by Lord Lothian, but with no better result. A third time Mr Sastri was asked by friends whether he would accept the honour if offered, but he was not willing.

To Mr. P. KODANDA RAO

MYLAPORE

10th October 1932

My dear Kodanda Rao

As usual your issue<sup>1</sup> has come late to me: but through no fault of yours. I have just read it. My first feeling is one of satisfaction that you have had the courage to express your views. My next feeling is that I should congratulate you on the tone of courtesy and profound respect which marks the criticism. Lastly, I approve of the criticism on its merits. That in this instance the Mahatma's method succeeded is no proof of its wisdom or propriety, and you are justified in giving clear expression to the general alarm as to its employment again in the future.

I wish you had referred to his calling the method by the name of religion. By doing so he practically rules out the operation of reason. For few will have the hardihood to examine a person's religious scruples or convictions by the unsparing test of reason. Of this criticism perhaps, the Mahatma would be more tolerant than his worshippers.

I agree with you that his example and the immense prestige that success has brought him will have the effect of encouraging other Satyagrahis to adopt the method of fasting to secure their particular object. The conclusion of this awful experiment is a proper occasion for examining its rationale before it is repeated by the author himself

1 Of *'The Servants of India'* of October 6, 1932, where appears Mr Kodanda Rao's editorial 'The Story of the Fast'.

or by his' imitators. I do not agree with you when you suggest that the pact may not be lasting. I think it will be, but it is due not to the method but to the peculiar features of the question at issue. These had been discussed. The personalities and the interests concerned were not half so irreconcilable, as for instance, those which should confront us when we tackle the Hindu-Muslim problem. In fact, caste Hindus had almost completely acquiesced in the 'Communal Award' of the Prime Minister. The trouble assumed tremendous importance because of the Mahatma's threatening to fast: your thesis would be quite correct in my judgement on almost any other great issue. When a man, clothed in the eyes of people with sanctity, is on the point of death, he puts those who deny his wish under fear of eternal perdition, and what is obtained in such conditions cannot be just or fully reasoned out. It is liable to open or covert repudiation as soon as the parties concerned become free and can act according to their own wishes or interests. Other aspects as to the propriety of the method also come into view, but I will refrain from considering them. But my general recoil from his method is so great that if the use of single words were not open to serious objection, I should call it moral coercion and the result achieved *whitemail* (formed on the analogy of *blackmail*). You ask whether the Indian nation was behind him. In the first place, the result shows that a part of the Indian nation which matters was behind him. Don't tell me that it is a very small part of the Indian nation. That would be true. If, however, that is the part that is vital, your question is answered. In the second place, why should the Indian nation be behind him? The most fanatical

democrat in the world might on a supreme occasion elect to obey his conscience in preference to a political theory. The other question, whether the way could be legitimately justified, because of its secondary consequences, is on truer ground. Your article does not notice another objection which weighs with me. The whole method of Satyagraha is based on the ground that it appeals to the reason of the opponent and converts him. Satyagraha, as we see it applied to mass movements, scarcely answers to this description. The opponent is frightened, his patience wears out, his good name is spoilt and his life is made a burden to him. Except that physical force is not applied, all the other elements of coercion are present. If, for instance, the British Government yield to the Mahatma's campaign, could it be argued that the British Government became for the first time alive to the justice or reasonableness of the Indian demand? Perhaps, by mobilising the public opinion of the outside world, Americans and Germans and Frenchmen may become for the first time aware of the nature of our case. The British government submit only when they can no longer hold out. Even the Mahatma would shrink from claiming that he had improved the moral or political stature of the British nation.

I follow you when you argue that the Poona pact contains the very poison which is supposed to vitiate the communal award and that it goes much farther. But though it is good controversy, it is not gracious recognition of the settlement. The Poona pact contains the poison, but it contains the antidote in greater strength than the award. As for the representation being larger under the pact than under the award, the answer would be that, if justice required it, it should be yielded. Apart

from all this, if the Mahatma sees the virtue of compromise at the end, is he to be blamed for not having seen it in the beginning? Moreover, don't you remember during our South African stay even such a friend as Kajee<sup>1</sup> maintaining that, by the Smuts-Gandhi settlement, as much at least was lost as was gained? It is a weakness of idealism that it gains subtle and sentimental points, while surrendering matters of substance and practical importance. I have known it asserted emphatically of the Gandhi-Irwin Pact.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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OFFER AND REFUSAL OF THE POST OF PRESIDENT  
OF THE COUNCIL OF STATE

From LORD WILLINGDON

To Mr SASTRI

VICEREGAL LODGE

SIMLA

11th October 1932

*Private*

My dear Sastri

I am writing to make you an offer which I much hope you will be able to accept though I am fully aware that your health may prevent you from saying 'yes.' I write to ask you if you would take up the post of President of the Council of State when Sir Henry Moncrieff Smith retires next month. As you well know, the duties are not

1 An able and influential leader of the S. African Indian movement.

heavy and consists of about three months' duty in the year in all. The conditions would be that you would be paid Rs. 4,000 a month for the time you are presiding and for a fortnight before and a week after each session.

I know that the height of Simla may militate against your saying 'yes,' but please remember that the session there is only as a rule for a month in all. Do send me a line as to this. I should much like to get an affirmative reply, for I would like to feel that a great public servant like yourself had got this important post.

Yours sincerely  
WILLINGDON

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From Mr SASTRI  
To LORD WILLINGDON

MYLAPORE  
19th October 1932

Dear Lord Willingdon

I have taken three full days to consider your Excellency's kind offer of the post of President of the Council of State. The more I think of it the more I appreciate the warm personal feeling that prompts it. Indeed my gratitude is so great that I cannot adequately express it.

To office under the Crown I have no aversion. As Servant of India I should feel it my duty to accept a position which, by reason of the nature of the work or the opportunities it gave, might enable me to render real service to the people of India. Acting on this principle,



I went to South Africa, as Your Excellency may remember, for a year and a half to occupy the then new post of Agent of the Government of India. The Managing Council of my Society would have no hesitation in allowing a member, so to speak, to suspend his membership, provided circumstances warranted such an unusual course. After the fullest thought I am not persuaded that I can make out a case for extraordinary action where the main attractions of the office, in the eye of the common man, are the ease, comfort and dignity of the occupant.

It is with great regret and humility that I convey to Your Excellency my inability to avail myself of your very kind offer.

Yours very truly

V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI

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*Personal*

Dear Lord Willingdon

I have not lost sight of the probability that, in offering me this post, you meant to enable me to stay in these anxious days within call, as it were, for the purpose of the consultation mentioned in your first letter. If this is your object, may I suggest that I should be far more useful if I retained my freedom as a private citizen? I am willing, if you wish it, to come up and stay in Delhi as long as it may be necessary. It is not necessary to make an official of me; indeed it may be a disadvantage.

Yours very truly

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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From LORD WILLINGDON

To Mr SASTRI

THE RETREAT

MASHOBRA

2nd November 1932

My dear Sastri

I am writing to you on two matters to-day which at the moment are much on my mind. The first has to do with the representation of British Indians at the forthcoming Round Table Conference as to which Hoare and I have been corresponding of late. I want to ask you quite frankly what are your feelings about going over next month. Hoare and I both feel that owing to your health we should not press you to go over: further than that, I feel that I must have some influential people over here to help me with their advice on the many points on which we shall be asked our opinion during the discussion in London. I should feel happy if I could have the advantage of your and C. P.'s advice during the weeks that are before us. We can influence the people at home. That I know, but I want all the backing I can get and I should like to feel that you were here to help me. Send me a line please and tell me exactly what you feel on the matter.

The next thing I want to give you my inmost feelings about is 'Gandhi'. I want peace and co-operation in this country. *He* can give this if he wishes. While I don't like his methods, he has secured a great advance for the depressed classes which is all to his credit. Why can't he give up his wretched Civil Disobedience Campaign? So long as, through this agitation by his followers, the

law is continually broken, so long I have to adopt measures to secure liberty to the law-abiding citizen. If he gave up Civil disobedience, he would be at liberty to carry on his great work for the depressed classes, but until he does, I can never trust him not to restart the whole trouble again.

It is a deplorable situation. Can nothing be done by those who know him best to get him to reconsider his position?

I am writing to you as a very old friend on whom I can absolutely rely. I am a Liberal, I want peace, but as an administrator I can't permit civil disobedience which is a policy of breaking the law.

Do help me in this matter.

Yours very sincerely

WILLINGDON

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From Mr SASTRI

To LORD WILLINGDON

SVAGATAM

MYLAPORE

12th November 1932

Dear Lord Willingdon

Please allow me to thank you for your very kind letter of the 2nd instant. It reached me only yesterday.

From press reports I gather the final list of members of the Conference is about to be published. It would appear the drastic reduction in number has made it impos-

sible to find room for me.<sup>1</sup> I confess I am disappointed. I have been carefully hoarding myself up for this culminating service to the country. My health too, feeble as it is, would have benefited by some stay in the English climate. However, one can only submit to the inevitable, and I have enough philosophy to do it in proper spirit.

1 Mr Sastri was not invited to the Third R. T. C. ostensibly on the grounds of his health. His name was also omitted from the list of Indians invited to co-operate with the Select Committee of the two Houses on Indian Reform *The Manchester Guardian* (of October 24, 1931) wrote:—"It will be a great regret to many in England, and not least to English liberals, that indifferent health prevents Mr Sastri from coming. His wisdom and suavity, not to speak of his unsurpassed eloquence have been so great a part of previous Round Table Conferences." *The Spectator* of April 28, 1933 wrote: "For, what inscrutable reason, I should like to know, has the name of Mr Srinivasa Sastri been omitted from the list of Indians invited to co-operate with the Select Committee of the two Houses on Indian Reform? Fourteen years ago I asked Edwin Montagu—just when he was drafting the bill based on his proposals—what Indian public man he regarded as the ablest and most effective co-operator with this country. "Sastri", he replied without a moment's hesitation and despite the tensions and frictions of the last half-a-dozen years I would make bold to say that there is no man in all India whose counsel and co-operation the Select Committee would seek with greater advantage. An article by his pen in a recent issue of his paper, *The Servant of India*, shows how candid and at the same time how temperate his criticism is. Mr Sastri was not invited to the Third Round Table Conference ostensibly on the grounds of his health, and the same excuse presumably does service still. I have reason to know that, so far from being too ill to come, Mr Sastri had been assiduously—and successfully—husbanding his strength to enable him to discharge what might have been the crowning task of his long career of public service. It is both foolish and unjust thus to disregard him."

You flatter as well as delight me when you bracket me with C. P. as likely to be useful in future consultations. Let me say this in perfect sincerity. Please consider me as being entirely at your disposal, and do not hesitate to call on my services.

In the last part of your letter you suggest to me a line of immediate usefulness. I realise how important it is. Also how difficult and delicate. It appeals to me so much, I wish I had ten times my ability and ten times my wisdom. Believe me, if I say *yes* it is because I am emboldened by your confidence in me.

Secrecy is essential. It is lucky Poona is the headquarters of my Society, and I can reside there without its being noted as extraordinary. Two further conditions appear to me essential at this stage.

(1) I must have access to Gandhiji without excessive notice to the superintendent or other formality.

(2) Upon occasion arising I must be enabled to communicate with you by telegraph. I don't know which would be better—my being provided with a code or allowed to use the confidential branch of the Bombay Secretariat.

Other points there must be which do not strike me now. If a preliminary talk be considered necessary, it can be arranged, while you are in Poona or the Deccan, as if in the usual course of events.

I shall remain here till I hear again.

With profound respect,

Yours sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI

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To Mr P. KODANDA RAO

MYLAPORE

26th November 1932

My dear Kodanda Rao

I haven't kept copies of the three letters I wrote to the Mahatma. He acknowledges two in the letter I copy. My criticism included several points. He touches one only.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps it affected him most.

As to Secession. You do well to discuss the topic. My view is different from yours. There should be no secession. The most conclusive reason, to my mind, is that India is one integral whole and tendencies to break away ought not to be encouraged. You know I hold these tendencies are too strong in India and have to be counter-acted.<sup>2</sup> The mere fact of freedom to secede is enough to enable rowdy provinces (excuse rough expression) to dictate and compel others to submit.

Burma is in a different category. In self-governing democratic India, it has no place. I am fully reconciled to its separation. But if, being already in, the province wishes to continue, I shan't object. To stipulate for freedom to get away as soon as convenient is more than I can tolerate. Separationists and anti-separationists don't differ much, so far as India is concerned.

1 See page 90.

2 Cf. Mr Sastri's opposition to the recent Cripps proposals.

Perhaps the wise thing is to say nothing in the constitution about secession. Let the devil appear before we tackle him.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr P. KODANDA RAO

COIMBATORE

18th September 1933

My dear Kodanda Rao

My opinion is clear and strong on the White Paper scheme. I have said it often. Here it is once more.

It is progressive in small ways. In essence it is anti-democratic and deliberately aims at keeping India weak, disunited, unable to act, and in Britain's leading-strings. I won't go so far as to say that in future it cannot be amended and made to subserve our purposes. It will be, that is certain. But not by any principle of evolution within it. The reforming power must come from outside. If I could stop the scheme coming, I would. But not all that Gandhi and Nehru and Congress and we and other like-minded people can do will stop it. We are not coherent and mobile like the Kenya whites under Delamere or Scott or some such leader. The Princes, Moslems, etc. are out to gain communal advantages. But the principal thing is that the Conservatives, having got the power now, will settle the thing in their way and complicate matters as much as possible. Vaze thinks, you have once written also, that, if we joined our opposition somehow with Winston

Churchill's,<sup>1</sup> this federation Scheme will be blocked. Impossible! The Baldwin-Hoare combination may have to conciliate the left of their party by a concession or two. But they would do so and see the White Paper scheme through. If they didn't mess up things for us, the next Labour Government could write on a comparatively clean slate and they might write DOMI though no further! Now, that is, with a rotten federation constitution, they have pitted powerful indigenous forces against reform.

So, my dear K., the d—d thing is coming. If you care, i.e., if any persons care, let them try and amend this constitution. I don't care, because it is impossible, and I hate it. Nor am I going to welcome it and help Hoare. There is no need. He is strong enough with our minorities and obscurantists for the purpose.

Let us watch and criticise, abuse and curse if our blood is up.

Yours affectionately  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr K. CHANDRASEKHARAN

COIMBATORE

25th September 1933

My dear Chandrasekharan

I am grieved I cannot attend the next Kalidasa Day, but ask leave to send a few lines to congratulate the Academy on their recognition of the service rendered both to Sanskrit and to Tamil by Mahavidvan Raghava Aiyangar.

1 He opposed the Bill bitterly till its enactment.



He must be happy that, by a strange and inexplicable chance in the story of our literature, it was reserved to him to give to the world the first genuine Tamil version of Sakuntalam. I believe nearly every other Vernacular in the country can boast of having had its own version for several generations; and every lover of Tamil must rejoice that a great deficiency in its rich and copious literature has at last been supplied. I have not seen a copy of the new book yet, nor had the good fortune, as some of you in Madras have no doubt had, of hearing parts of it read by the author himself and annotated from the rare stores of his scholarship. Not that, if the good fortune *had* been mine, I should be in any position to judge of the literary merit of the work. On this head, however, I am prepared to accept without hesitation the guarantee of the great reputation of the Mahavidvan, whom South India will soon acclaim as *Bhasha Kavisekhar*.

With good wishes for the Academy

Yours very sincerely.

V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI

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TO RAO BAHADUR A. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

COIMBATORE

13th June 1934

Dearest Friend

I fear I am losing Lakshmi.<sup>1</sup> Almost like a thief, the enemy stole on her at night and is galloping away with her.

1 Mrs. Sastri.

She had two days of hell. She lies now, perfectly quiescent, with no power over her body, in what looks like peaceful slumber. The arms move still.

We are watching.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO RAO BAHADUR A. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

COIMBATORE

21st June 1934

*For your eye only*

My dear Krishnaswami Aiyar

Lakshmi would have turned to you instinctively in any need. So did I in the days of her suffering. And when she left us, my thoughts sought you as often as they sought any one else. Yet neither words nor sentiments took clear body and form. A vague sense of asylum there was, no more. The suddenness crushed one's spirit utterly.

It is six days now! I shall no doubt learn to do without her while I live yet. It is a wonder I have only once called her by name since. I should do so a thousand times daily.

The company here and the incessant chatter fill the vacancy at present. In a few days it will yawn wide and dreadful.

We are trying to shift to another house. This one is too full of her. At night I seem to hear her moans and cries from the room where she lay. To add to our distress,

they leave a small vessel with water there, and the lamp burns in it all night. The monsoon wind howls through the house and the window doors open and shut with a bang making sleep, difficult already, still more difficult. My sister and Lakshmi's sister sleep in the same room with Rukmini and the little children; else they would be seized with terror.

Funny little problems arise caused by her not being with us. With strange folly, I say every time she would solve this in a trice!

Yes, between her and you there was an unavowed bond of sympathy and regard. I watched it with pride and complete satisfaction. "What does the *old one* say?" she would ask with the affection and trust with which she would ask an oracle. She bore no grudge, she did no harm. So far as I could see, my relations cherished her, and my friends honoured her. In matters that came within her range, her instinct was sound and her judgment trustworthy.

Her daughter and her grandchildren she loved with a measureless love; for me she had a feeling as for a god. Often she taught me to be just and forgiving. Hard as it may be to believe, she guarded my good name as her own and kept me from thoughts and deeds that might have injured it—Well, she was too good and too noble for me. Now and hereafter, I hope her memory will keep me straight.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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From Sjt. BABU RAJENDRA PRASAD

To Mr SASTRI

PATNA

3rd January 1935

Dear Mr Sastri

I have read with considerable interest the proceedings of the Liberal Federation and particularly the resolution relating to the J. P. C. Report and your speech in moving it. While it is true there are fundamental differences between the Congress and the Liberal Federation both as regards the goal and the method pursued in reaching it, it seems there is considerable convergence of views on the J. P. C. Report. Would it be possible for the two to chalk out a common line of action for the limited purpose of meeting the situation created by this Report without in any way expecting or insisting on either to abate its ideal or alter its methods? It is obvious that it will be to the great advantage of the country, if this could be done. If we could see any line of approach, we might ask our respective organizations to investigate further any proposals that might emerge. I hope you are keeping good health.

With kind regards, Yours sincerely

RAJENDRA PRASAD

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TO BABU RAJENDRA PRASAD

337

POONA

7th January 1935

Dear Rajendra Prasad

A letter from you would be always welcome. The one that I got yesterday was a pure joy. I am grateful.

In a day or two I shall send you a copy of an article I have written for the *Servant of India*. It will show that I have been thinking more or less like you.

Party politics have a nasty trick of twisting even good men from their true nature. I trust the crisis in our fortunes, almost without a parallel, will teach you the need and even the duty of a little compromise, if thereby you could get the progressive part of the nation behind you as well as your own followers.

With loving good wishes

Yours very truly

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To H. H. THE MAHARAJAH OF BIKANER

11th January 1935

My dear Maharajah Saheb

It was an act of kindness as well as of honour for your Highness to write to me freely upon a subject of national importance.<sup>1</sup> I cannot begin except by saying how greatly I appreciate the compliments.

1 Princes and the Federation.

Perhaps it is well to clear the ground of certain personal references which are apt to embarrass the discussion of public questions. Your Highness may remember when you left London in the middle of the second session of the R. T. C. I sent you a note of good-bye in which I called you the sleepless champion of federation. I am still filled with admiration and gratitude as I recall the brave and ever vigilant part you took in the work of building up a united India. On many points naturally we differed and differed sharply. But you impressed me as a virile and magnetic personality that had acquired a beneficent predominance in the counsels of the Princes and of the R. T. C. I particularly remember the prompt response that you courageously made at the meeting of the Federal Structure Committee to my appeal that the Princes should disavow and repudiate the recommendation of the Butler Committee that future recruitment to the Foreign and Political Department should be restricted to the Universities of England.

When it became clear that to the shrunken R. T. C. of the third year neither you nor Bhopal was going, my heart sank within me. I felt somehow that the original spirit was dead. Of your Order the principal spokesmen were henceforth to be those who had hesitated and grumbled and shown themselves to be out of sympathy with the large ideas that were prevalent at St. James's Palace. Finance opened a dangerous rift between British India and Indian India. Safeguards multiplied. The Secretary of State and others lost no opportunity of saying that, if only the Princes were kept *khush*, an experiment in real democracy might be made in India which would leave Great Britain and her interests absolutely unimpaired.

Your Highness need not be reminded that at one stage so stout and untiring a champion of the States and their rulers as Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru felt compelled to contemplate the probability of their standing out and to ask in that event that British India should be allowed to march alone towards Dominion Status.

I am venturing to send your Highness a copy of my speech at the recent Liberal Federation and one of an article that I have written subsequently in the *Servant of India*. Perhaps they will make my position clear. Certain writers and speakers have pointed out that there is an inherent incompatibility between Dominion Status on the one hand and the maintenance of the paramountcy of the British Crown on the other. On behalf of your Order it has been claimed that this dependence on the Crown should be perpetual. The complete Indianisation of the army and its final transfer to federal control has not yet been admitted by the authorities as part of their policy, and they refuse even to contemplate the fixation of a period for the withdrawal of the British Army of occupation. I will not pretend for a moment that the Princes are to blame for what seem to be serious perils to the ideal of Dominion Status. No, that would be manifestly unfair. But it is a serious crippling of those who carry on the struggle for Dominion Status to find that their allies of the princely order are unable (may be for good reasons) to give them any open help; and yet who could doubt that the glory and advantages of Dominion Status will be as much the gain of the States as of British India?. Is it too much for the Princes to express their surprise at the complete silence of the J. P. C. Report on this subject of India's goal of political evolution in view of the fact that

in the first days of the R. T. C. the Princes enthusiastically welcomed Lord Irwin's proclamation of 1929? Again, am I wrong in my recollection that Sir Akbar Hydari actually protested against the total elimination of the British element in the army? Sir Akbar's influence with the Secretary of State appears now to be exceedingly great. I must also mention my alarm at the claim made by your Order and allowed by the authorities that no change in the constitution could take effect until it had been separately ratified by each one of the six hundred States. And though I mention it last I attach great importance to the political status of the subjects of States. I confess to a feeling that the Princes would be doing themselves an inestimable service if, abandoning the technical plea of internal sovereignty, they would combine and make an encouraging announcement in favour of progressive liberalisation.

In my anxiety to lose not even a day in answering your Highness's letter, I have been too brief. Perhaps you will allow me another opportunity or two of stating my views on these and kindred topics. Meanwhile let me assure your Highness that I cordially reciprocate your friendliness and confidence and trust that these remarks will be construed as coming from a sincere friend and well-wisher of Indian India and its illustrious representatives.

With the season's greetings, and sincerest good wishes to your Highness and family.

Yours sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASA SASTRI

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TO Mr A. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

341

BANGALORE CITY

24th January 1935

Dear Friend

Here I have just finished a trilogy on Gokhale.<sup>1</sup> I spoke for an hour and a half each day to an audience which was 3,000 the first day, 4,000 the second, and 5,000 the third. The attention I commanded was so profound, I felt flattered and proud. I had no notes. The Vice-Chancellor was struck dumb with astonishment and read a three minutes' praise of me, calling my performance a *tour de force*. To me the greatest wonder was that I felt neither pain nor exhaustion. I felt and said I was performing a sacred duty like a parent's obsequies and was therefore immune from disease or infirmity.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO RAO BAHADUR A. KRISHNASWAMI AIYAR

POONA

31st March 1935

Dearest Friend

This note is several days behind, but there is no more to write for that reason. Life is reduced to routine for me and one day is so like another I ask myself why prolong.

1 These Mysore University Extension Lectures were published by the Bangalore Printing and Publishing Co. in 1937.

You come frequently into my thoughts—stooping and looking at your own sandals, which you drag with an effort, the ancient blanket resting on the shoulder with accustomed repose, the fingers of the right hand tracing queer lines on the heedless air, the head no longer poised firmly, but thrown forward and a wee bit sideward, as if too heavy with borrowed cares and adopted tasks, and the mind—ah, that mind! who shall sort its contents? May be the most suitable transport of a patient from Guindy to the hospital, maybe a word of unfelt anger to the school contractor, maybe the supply of a missing link in the chain of evidence for a trumpery small cause suit to which a cousin or a nephew of an old friend is a party, maybe some subtle flattery by which a simple official could be wheedled into forgetting restrictive bye-laws. . . . Good honest items every one: but does it strike you ever that others may do them just as well as you, and that if they were not done so well, the world would not be the worse the least bit? Why not listen two hours daily to the melting *thevaram* of a half-starved *andi*, helping the puzzled intelligence of a neighbour with pregnant comments on the vocables and allusions? Why not get an old sastri to chant the Upanishads or expound the *Gita*, now and then startling him by questions suggestive of the limitation of rishis or the unbridled exegetical ingenuity of Sankara? And why not. I ask twice, why not spend a quiet hour at home, submitting to the just reproaches of a long-suffering partner, from whom so much has been exacted but to whom so little has been given? Believe me always your saucy, but reverent and worshipful,

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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ANNAMALAINAGAR

10th June 1935

Dear Mr Sundararaghavan

The uncle<sup>1</sup> was far the greater Editor. He was terribly in earnest about things, took strong views, advocated them vigorously and was a valiant champion. Also he was better equipped with constitutional knowledge and was more intimately acquainted with men and affairs. For some years one could tell his leading articles by the telling quotations with which he generally ended them. The authors he cited were Mill, Spencer, Burke, Bright and people of that stamp, which is proof that he did his political reasoning in the orthodox liberal style, tracing it wherever he could to well-known principles.

So far as one could judge from leading articles, the nephew<sup>2</sup> was less of a disputant. He was urbane even though sarcastic, for his sarcasm was charged with literary flavour and seldom wounded. He gave the impression that he was in constant search of humorous situations and drew amusement from politics, at the same time trying to convey it to others. Both his love and his hate were comparatively tepid.

The uncle had a vehement nature, and some persons were his favourites, while others incurred his unforgiving hostility. I believe the nephew was more equable in temper and never came near to being a fanatic. Altogether his personality was smaller and less significant.

1 S. Kasturi Ranga Aiyengar.

2 S. Rangaswami.

I knew the uncle better than the nephew, but even the uncle I knew with no great intimacy. My judgement is not based on much material in either case, and must be taken with caution.

Yours sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr T. R. VENKATARAMA SASTRI

BASAVANGUDI

BANGALORE CITY

29th April 1936

My dear Venkataraman

You must have got Jawaharlal's circular *re* the proposed Union to counter the suppression of Civil Liberties in India. I enclose my copy, which I got to-day, in case Sir Mocherla hasn't been remembered. Sir P.S.S., he and you must consult together and send a proper reply. I am in favour tho' I should stipulate for this and that. It is true we seem in this country to be better in the matter than people in most parts of the world. Only England, France and one or two small countries are more fortunate than we. Still it is necessary to take a firm stand against the increased menace to freedom. The terrorists more, and the Congress less, are responsible for this state of things. At the same time Government is taking advantage of some disorder there undoubtedly is and going too far in its own non-Indian interests.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

TO SIR P. S. SIVASWAMI AIYAR

345

BANGALORE CITY

108, NORTH ROAD

BASAVANGUDI

9th May 1936

Dear Friend

I have read your draft reply to Jawaharlal Nehru. It seems to me censorious in tone and unless revised with care, will bring odium on the signatories.

Is it necessary to condemn Congress policy and methods in our answer? It would be on the assumption that you obviously make that Nehru wishes an association of public organizations. A sentence in the beginning of his circular points that way; but lower down and particularly towards the end he makes it clear that he wants the new body to be composed of individuals. He addresses us not as liberals but as freedom-loving citizens. Criticism of Congress policy and methods does not appear to be called for.

But it may well come in if our determined purpose is to give a negative reply. For I agree with you that as soon as, on any important occasion, definite action has to be taken, the members of the new body, of whom a considerable majority will be Congressman, will adopt methods which we have consistently condemned, and we shall be compelled to come out.

But I am not clear by any means that our reply should be negative. The juster as well as more prudent course is to concentrate on the aim which is irreproachable, and receive proposals and examine them with earnestness. A

forecast of the probable course of events, however convincing it may appear to us, is but a forecast, and it is, on an occasion like the present one, not wise or prudent to act upon it as though it were a certainty. When it does become a fact, it will be time enough to point out how things make it impossible for us to remain in and then come out. Only so shall we prove that the cry of co-operation on our lips is not a convention or mockery as it seems to be in the case of others. Nor can we ignore the circumstance that English liberals have always regarded the protection of civil liberties as their special privilege. Our own steps in the direction having been rather feeble and ineffectual, we had best prove our earnestness by joining an organization or rather by seriously considering proposals for starting an organization which *may* function both wisely and efficiently.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN.

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To Mr A. V. THAKKAR

ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY

ANNAMALAINAGAR.

12th July 1936

My dear Thakkar

A letter from you is an event. I must give prompt expression to my joy and gratitude.

Yes, my work is not arduous, but helps in the education of the young. I like it, besides.

From others too, I heard good accounts of the session.<sup>1</sup> Hariji and Vaze seem, each in his sphere, to have done well. One is happy, if for no other reason, because one was not there to spoil it. Suppose I had been there and made a speech!

I was indeed pleased that you gave the ladies every assistance. It would be premature to incorporate them with ourselves. Do you think they will grow? Perhaps in five years or ten, the two bodies may be amalgamated.

Do you know I saw Gandhiji in Bangalore? His faculty of keeping private friendships alive amidst public differences is marvellous, and one wishes his followers learnt that virtue.

You keep young in spite of years. I envy you. Your activity is high-souled, single-pointed, clear-sighted. Noble heart, go ahead. My only wish for you is that your asceticism was more humanised.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To THE SECRETARY, S. I. S., POONA

ANNAMALAINAGAR

10th November 1936

Bored and tired, I readily accepted an invitation from the Government of India to go as a solitary delegate to

<sup>1</sup> The Annual session of S. I. S.

Malaya and inquire into the conditions of Indian labour. It didn't occur to me to ask whether it would be easy or hard work, up to or beneath my dignity. I merely stipulated that it should be honorary and that my son should be allowed to accompany me as Private Secretary. The conditions were accepted, but there the matter hung till the other day when, all of a sudden, Bajpai wrote me a private loving note that, though his mind had long been made up, he had to wait till the Assembly session was over. Would I sail from Calcutta on the 27th? Only I should see the Viceroy on the way! This meant I should leave this place the very night of the Convocation, having had some terribly long day's work. I pleaded for some respite by telegram; two days have been mercifully allowed. I must sail on the 29th. But no detail is vouchsafed. A Civilian named Bozman is to be my adviser and the mission is expected to last two months. My rank and designation, allowances, my son's allowances, the secretarial assistance provided are unknown. Probably these and kindred matters are under discussion yet, for my son says he has had nothing yet from his Madras masters, who themselves (I understand) know nothing yet. Meanwhile, I have notified the authorities here and got them privately—I learned the trick from the Government of India—to agree that, in case I vacate the office temporarily Mr T. R. Venkatarama Sastri should run this show during my absence without prejudice to his professional work and, in return for his extra labour, draw second class railway fare whenever he visited the University headquarters and look for no other reward. So my allowance of Rs. 250 per mensem lapses to the University while I am away! Government must keep me while I am on their job.



I am expecting every post to bring me the final order or every issue of the *Hindu* to contain a regular announcement, but apparently I am a soldier who has been mobilised and must sleep with kit under arm, ready to march at a signal.

I have glided into this business without deliberation. It isn't dishonourable, it isn't for private profit, it isn't communal or anti-national. It is the service of our people, similar in kind though perhaps not in prestige or opportunity, to missions undertaken by our members in the past. What more to recommend it? Rather what was there to *discommend* it? My personal rank or dignity is irrelevant.

As to propriety of co-operating with Government at this juncture, my political mentality is such that I haven't the tiniest dot of a scruple, doubt or compunction. On the contrary let me own to a wee bit of malicious glee—I grant it is not conducive to serenity of thought—that I am in a position to demonstrate in my person that I am wholly opposed to the view that leads the Congress High Command to exact surrender of titles, abstention from Government-tainted social parties and other proofs of an artificially worked-up hatred from candidates for election.

Now I have let myself go, please allow me to knock respectfully at the door of the Council and ask their leave for this temporary absence from India and the public service that, without solicitation or suggestion, has been offered. I should have applied earlier, I realise; but may I plead that even at this moment the negotiation has not reached finality, Government has not announced their decision, no irrevocable step has been taken. The truth is,

I am frightened at the way in which a correspondence that is still ' confidential ' has arrived at what cannot but be called the penultimate stage and the actual date for fulfilment has approached without the formal seal being imprinted on the contract.

I throw myself on the indulgence of the Council.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

P.S.—I need not add that this communication, so obviously free from convention and even from customary etiquette must be treated as *strictly confidential*.

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To Mr K. BALASUBRAMANIA AIYAR

ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY

16th March 1937

My dear Mani

It is a great deprivation to me that I cannot be there to-morrow when Mylapore will gather to honour our dear friend. You are a good fellow; or I would accuse you of malice aforethought to have fixed on a day impossible for me.

A hundred portraits of Rao Bahadur A. Krishnaswami Aiyar should be on view all over the place; they would scarcely suffice to indicate the good that he has done during a long life. He minds other people's affairs; his own he leaves to Providence. Is there a person to whom he has knowingly done harm? Is there a person who

sought his help in need and was refused? His soul is all compact of benevolence. There is no measuring the comfort and happiness that he has secured for people. Physical ailment, family discord, legal knot that wants untying, son or son-in-law unemployed, school house requiring to be built—public or private needs—have only to make themselves known, and he will not rest till they are satisfied.

What he looks like in the picture to be exhibited to-morrow I do not know. But I love to fancy him walking with thoughtful mien along a dusty Mylapore Road, sans umbrella, sans shoes, tanned and wrinkled, head tilted a wee bit on one side, *angavastram* and red shawl thrown on the left shoulder, eyes cast on the ground, the fingers of the depending right hand scribbling in the air, his methodical mind revolving, maybe some problem in ethics for Sivaswami Aiyar, some conundrum in law for Venkatarama Sastri, or some fatherly comfort for his pet Savitri waiting under the shade of the mango tree in the Āsrama. How I wish I could draw! When my wife and I lived in Svāgatam, we looked for his coming as for that of a guardian angel. I swelled with pride to notice their mutual confidences, perhaps over some intemperance or trespass of mine, drawn together *āntareṇa kenāpi hethunā*.<sup>1</sup>

I must conclude. You are waiting for other witnesses to his virtue and worth. At this point I hear his *Sri Ramassaranam*. That saying, so frequent on his lips, is Krishnaswami Aiyar all over. When I first heard it, I ventured to ask why he omitted the final word of the eight-

<sup>1</sup> By some inner affinity.

lettered mantra.<sup>2</sup> He looked gently at me but said nothing. Methought he asked: "Must I tell?" I should have known better than to put the question. The *mamakara* does not go with his nature. You can't think at the same time of him and of the first person singular and its possessive at that.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY

✓ 20th March 1937

To SIR GIRIJA SHANKAR BAJPAI

My dear Bajpai

Yesterday the post brought me a copy of the report that I submitted to the Government of India on Malaya. This is the first occasion that I have had anything from your office or from you since I left New Delhi.

The report has had a bad press. *The Indian* of Kuala Lumpur is specially offensive. I trust you haven't let yourself be unduly influenced by the violence of the criticism. No doubt I am surprised, but after the first shock, my mind has recovered its equanimity. I can't think how I could have framed my conclusions otherwise. Generally speaking, I am not known for unreasoning obstinacy of opinion. The comments, however, that I have so far read, are abusive without being helpful. Three deep-rooted prejudices seem to lie at the bottom of the average critic's mind. Assisted emigration must be stopped; if allowed,

2 Sri Ramassaranam mama

it must be in return for the grant of full citizenship rights; and these rights must include the right of unrestricted emigration and employment of educated Indians. Now I am persuaded, after full consideration, that our demand of free emigration and employment cannot be pushed any longer beyond certain limits, which may be agreed upon. This right is entirely denied by the Dominions, and India has been granted the freedom to deny it if she cares. Kenya, Burma, Ceylon are clamouring for restriction of this so-called right of ours. Sooner or later we shall be compelled to agree. Malaya has not begun to ask for it, but she has found it necessary, without declaring a policy, to limit the number of educated Indians that she will take into her services. Our unemployed educated men there believe firmly that the Government of India can and must bargain openly for a certain proportion of posts in the Malayan public services for them in return for the cheap labour that India supplies. A similar belief exists in Ceylon. While I should rejoice to see our men being entertained outside India in service, I cannot reconcile myself to the idea of refusing labour to the countries which wish to protect their educated men from unlimited competition with ours. It is not just to those countries, and it is cruel to our starving labourers, especially in Madras. My critics say I have discovered in Malaya a paradise for Indian labour. I don't make any such egregious claim. But I maintain that our labour profits in every conceivable respect by being allowed to emigrate to Malaya; and it is a sin on our part, besides being a most silly bargain, to deny tens of thousands of labourers their chance in life in order to get half a dozen educated men decent employment.

Political rights as well as elementary citizenship rights I am all for demanding on behalf of emigrants allowed to settle in overseas areas. But Malaya does not deny these things to our people except in the sense that she denies them to her own people. Is it right to force political development on a country which fancies that she is happy without it? If it is right, can we achieve the end by the means at our disposal?

I realise that, owing to the teaching of Gandhi and Andrews, a strong sentiment has established itself among our educated classes against the movement of our labour to other parts of the commonwealth. It had, alas, good justification in indenture days. But we have long gone past them, now our Government safeguards labour in various ways before allowing it to go out. These safeguards were illusory at first and in certain places. In Malaya any way, they are fully operative, thanks to the high quality of planters and their agents and to the vigilance of Government superintendents. The right to emigrate is an attribute of high-grade citizenship, and I would not sacrifice it lightly or even suspend it for long and indefinite periods. If we are to use it only when we become independent or acquire Dominionhood, we may have to wait for generations, and shall have lost the capacity for it when the time arrives. History proclaims that at an early period we built ships, moved freely on the waters and founded colonies that lasted for centuries. This genius we lost later on and shall never reconquer it.

Please see within this letter a certain statement of the orthodox ideas on the subject which I received some days ago from Benares. It illustrates the unbalanced ideology

of the day as well as anything that I have read. I must ask you to return it after Bozman and you have read it. Other aspects of the problem I refrain from discussing here. Forgive me even this much. I have put down these thoughts to give you an indication of the way my mind works, not to instruct you.

One last point. I realise that now, perhaps for the first time, I am urging the Government of India to adopt a policy in overseas matters different from the one favoured by the Indian community directly concerned. It may be difficult, more difficult than I imagine. The Government has acquired a certain amount of popularity in recent years for identifying itself with Indian sentiment. I cannot expect you will agree knowingly to forfeit it. You for your part may see that the position taken by our countrymen in Malaya is unreasonable. My report goes far to make it clear. But are you to abandon publicly and in terms the contentions that for the last six or seven years have been dinned into our ears by the writings in the Indian press of Malaya? Much will turn on the line that our Agent advises you to take in the light of the fierce denunciation to which my report has been subjected. An attempt has been made to pit the Agent against me. It may even succeed partially. I am much concerned to think that I have made your position difficult. But be sure that, if you decide to compromise and take a safe line, I shall not feel hurt in the least degree. My endeavour has been to help you. I shall be the last person to complain if you feel that the Government of India cannot afford to accept my recommendations. My business is over; all I have to do is to wish that you may be guided

wisely in the dilemma in which circumstances (including my report) have placed you. Let me indulge the hope that you will be able to discover a way of escape which will save alike your popularity and your reputation with the Government of Malaya. Believe me when I add as my particular wish that no consideration for my personal feelings ought to turn you one jot from the course that justice and expediency suggest.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER

THE PALACE, GAJNER

BIKANER, RAJPUTANA

March 1933

Ambulu darling

Yesterday morning the Maharajah and I drove through the city in his grand car, which it was a job to turn into the smaller streets. Everywhere people lined up in crowds several rows deep, and shouted, *khana, khana* with their hands together in *anjali's* over their heads or in front of their chests. H. H. explained the cry to me. It means *kshama* or mercy! Occasionally different cries were heard which meant "May you live a crore of *Divalis*!" This word, as you may guess, is the same as *Dipavali*. H. H. drew my attention to the expression on the faces of his subjects. "I could compel them to come out and throng the streets, but what power could force them to smile and look happy? And yet your newspapers call us tyrants and wicked monsters." The Maharajah is popular, being kind and affable and constantly showing himself



before his people. In some quarters the houses on both sides were magnificent, and I asked whether the owners were the famous multimillionaires of Bikaner. "Yes" he said; and to my further inquiry whether some of them were worth ten crores, answered that was an exaggeration. The richest among them had seven crores, and the British Government had made him a K.C.I.E. (You must find out what this is if you don't know). Bikaner had the greatest number in India of such *Kotiprabhus*; but the recent depression has reduced the total strength as well as their individual wealth. During the recent Jubilee festival of the Maharajah one of the fat *Marwaris* had an arch studded with sovereigns and bordered with silver rupees—the number being estimated at 5,000. Another man's arch was plated all over with silver and gold. These and other decorations were on view for three months and guarded night and day by armed sepoy. H. H. mentioned these extraordinary incidents with pride, but added quickly as if slighting them: "But what use is all this wealth to these fellows? I wish I had it. There are a hundred big things for which I want money, but can't find it." Parenthetically, these *Marwaris*, even the fattest of them, live in extreme simplicity and even miserliness. One was notorious in this way. I must tell you a story which the Private Secretary told of him. H. H. could not vouch for it, but admitted it was likely. Pandit Malaviya, who went about collecting monies for his gigantic Hindu University in Benares, at one time visited this town and tackled this prince of misers. His friends had warned him of the extreme difficulty of his task, but the Pandit had invincible faith in the sacredness of his cause and his own power of melting the stoniest of hearts. In vain,

however, was his sweet voice and even his marvellous eloquence; he paraded his unequalled knowledge of scripture for nothing. Failing with the old man, he tried his arts on a reprobate son, who had rebelled against his father and was incurring debts right and left against his prospective fortune. From this spendthrift the Pandit secured a promise of ten thousand rupees, for which he was requested to return later in the day. When he reappeared, the donor was not to be found anywhere in the house nor could any one give news of him. The father himself ran all over the house and was disconsolate with grief at the disappearance of his beloved though wayward child. The Pandit went away, a sadder and wiser man. The fact was that the crafty miser, coming to know of his son's folly, had lured him into an underground cellar which contained the family's hoards and locked the idiot in.

To return to the main narrative. The Maharaja took me to his favourite temple, the presiding deity being Lakshmi Narayanji. It was small, compared to our temples, but infinitely cleaner and better kept. You saw pure white marble almost everywhere and beautifully carved red stone. We were relieved at the gate of our shoes and socks. The Maharajah made *Sashtanga Pranamas* in two or three places, gave three rupees and withdrew from the inner sanctuary without turning his back on the image. Me he begged not to do the prostrations or make offerings. Thousands of worshippers stood about, more women than men; and though they cried *khana, khana*, none importuned the ruler or me for alms. What a contrast to our temples!

This morning brought me a wonderful experience. H. H. introduced to me a regular giant. He was an American gentleman, an engineer by profession, whom H. H. had brought out for a special job. He was six foot nine, dwarfing his master as they stood talking. He was stout in proportion, and as he had a clear complexion and an engaging countenance, you thought him a friendly visitor from another planet. There was a dinner at night in my honour. Among the ladies to whom I was introduced was a Mrs Mackenzie. "Are you," I queried, "the wife of the engineer whom I saw this morning?" "Yes, Sir". "You can't lose your husband ever." Whereat the company laughed aloud, but not uproariously. She enjoyed the joke hugely. Do you guess what she said? "My husband is too tall, too tall." "You mean, for you?", I asked running my eye over her shapely but small person. "No, not that" she replied, laughing still more. "He can't squeeze himself into these berths in trains or cabins in ships." As she spoke those words, the whole company turned their eyes, as if by agreement, to where he stood, majestic head and shoulders above those around. I strode towards him and ventured, "Have you encountered your superior yet?" "Yes, once", he replied. More he was prevented from communicating by some one giving to the talk a needless and insipid turn. I could have wrung the neck of that prattler, I was so annoyed.

I write now in a pretty palace, situated on a small lake, some twenty miles from the capital. It is a delightful change; for you see some cultivation and tall trees, and the

air is palpably cooler and less suffocating. Breakfast was served for me at my regular hour of ten. H. H., who doesn't eat till noon, sat narrating the annals of his state and the thrilling exploits of his ancestors. I listened with open mouth and glistening eyes; for H. H. is a great storyteller and spices his account with frequent references to present-day circumstances, from which all romance and poetry have been emptied. Now and then, noticing my absorption, he would say. "But please get on with your meal." "Let me not interrupt your breakfast." I was lost as I was told of the family feuds of five centuries between Jodhpur and Bikaner (now happily reconciled) among the wondrous exploits and silly quarrels of Rajput heroes and heroines recorded in Tod's gilded pages. And I admitted to him a strange mood of penitence that was stealing over me. At the Round Table Conference, my colleagues of British India had been scandalized by the brag and boast of the princes and had become impatient of their references to their solar and lunar ancestry and to their 'sovereignty' which existed only in their imagination. Now I glimpsed the background of the mentality of the princely order. I confessed I saw things in better perspective and with more sympathy and understanding. His Highness Ganga Singh of Bikaner has a clearer title to our admiration than other Rajahs. No part of his story is more interesting or shows his natural gifts to better advantage than the skill, persistence and diplomacy with which he has brought the redundant waters of the Sutlej into his territory and reclaimed many thousands of acres in the northern part of his desert kingdom. It reminds me of Bhagiratha of old. What more need I say? Here

is a small measure of the improvement which stands to his credit. In about 300 of his parched villages, even to-day the water is brackish and poisonous to such a degree that cattle cannot be allowed to drink their fill but are forcibly driven away from the ponds when they are still half-thirsty. The Private Secretary, himself a Rajput noble, owning several hundred head of cattle, once had nearly all of them dead before his eyes because his herdsman had been a little careless and omitted to beat back the animals in time; they had drawn in more mouthfuls than were good for them and drunk themselves to death.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO HIS GRAND-DAUGHTER

DR SIVAKAMU'S HOUSE

BIKANER

26th March 1938

Ambulu darling

You see where I write this letter. The Maharajah had to go suddenly to Patiala to condole with the present Maharajah of that State on the death of his father. So, with His Highness' leave, I have come to spend two days with Sivakamu, whom mother should remember easily. She is sister to Mrs Rukmini Arundale. Here she is the head of the women's medical service and gets a salary of Rs. 850 to Rs. 1,200. Her position is high and she commands great respect and influence. She lived in Svāgatam

for nearly one year before we acquired it. Under her in the women's hospital another Madras doctor is working, Sarada by name. She is the daughter of Mr S. Lakshmana Aiyar, retired lecturer of the Teachers' College, Saidapet, who used to come to our place often. She has married a Telugu gentleman, who is a Madras M.A. and is employed in the local college. Her salary is Rs. 250 to Rs. 450, his is Rs. 125. She dined with us here last night. It was a pleasure to hear Sivakamu and Sarada talk, English; they have a good command of its idiom, grammar and vocabulary.

It is so cold at night that you require a thick blanket. But the day is very hot, though, if you stay indoors, you don't feel it. I go out only after 6 p.m. Outside the city there is not anything to see. It is all one sandy waste; the only object visible is a small tree, four feet high, bearing an edible fruit which we should call இலந்தை, if the shrub was not full of thorns. The town has only ten miles of good motor road and it is well-tarred. The people depend upon sandy tracks; most transport is on the backs of camels, of which one can see hundreds on hundreds. The poorest man owns one of these animals. They cost Rs. 40 to 400. It is easy to keep them, only Rs. 5 to 10 a month being required. They do all sorts of work in the worst weather and do not need a roof or shelter of any kind. You see scores of peacocks all over the place. To injure or kill them is a crime punishable under the law. Pigeons are similarly protected. Of course, cows are; other animals too. You see all this part of India was once under Jain rule; and even now, Jains are numerous and influential by reason of their wealth. They are a crude community and their practices

are strange and even barbarous. For instance, little boys and girls are made *Sadhus*, the parents taking a vow to dedicate one of their children to the religious life. When a girl goes through the ceremony, all the relatives and friends crowd together and some of these pull out her hair by the hand little by little. The operation lasts long and is very painful. But the victim must not cry or show any sign of grief. Even rich parents doom one of their children to this life, which is one of bareness and beggary. The mouth is always closed by a cloth cover; and the *Sadhu* enters a house of which the door is open, does not ask or beg, but takes the remains of what the inmates have eaten. He or she is worshipped with reverence; and if they are known for piety and learning, people are always waiting round and tumbling over one another, if they by any chance sneeze, cough or spit, to catch what is thrown out. Did you ever hear of such a thing?

Here is another story to match it. In these parts, if a member of a noble family chews betel, the servants receive the spittle on their hollow palms and proceed to chew it in their turn! Among us the custom of wives eating on the leaves of their husbands, not always cleaned for the purpose, is in vogue still in orthodox families—vestiges of slavery, and women were only slaves at first.

To return to nature. Water is scarce. They have to pay for it. The dirty habits of men, women and children can be imagined. Clothing cannot be washed or changed. It is common to wipe the vessels with hard sand and then with cloth. No doubt they look clean and shiny. A well is a thousand or two thousand feet deep. The Maharaja

recently spent eight lakhs to find water in certain spots and employed high-power machinery from the west, but in the end abandoned the project. His palaces are, however, served with a plentiful supply of good water; and lawns and parks are maintained. Even a swimming tank. The wild boar and deer are the only game, besides some small birds. His Highness, who is a crack shot, goes into the territory of other princes for practice. His palaces are hung all over with tigers' and panthers' skins. I believe they are above 200. But not one of these creatures can live on the sands of his deserts. Poisonous reptiles abound. I hear the black cobra, *Kalanaga*, is common but the wonder of the State in that line is a snake called *Pena*. He is a crafty beast. Hear how he gets his victims. When they are asleep he crawls near their mouth and spreads his hood just over them. In a minute or two his poison is released from under the fangs and a drop or two fall on the eye or the mouth. Instantly he makes his exit; and the sleeper slowly wakes only to die in a few minutes. It is incredible to me; but the Private Secretary to His Highness, who is my informant, vouches his word for it. He adds that the serpent has such hard scales that no stone or stick can kill it. It seems it has to be secured and burnt.

That is enough reading for you at one stretch.

*Your loving tata*

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY

1st May 1938

*Personal and private*

Dearest Friend

Three years have nearly passed since you gave the University into my hands. My term is run out all but two months.<sup>1</sup>

No man, however high, should be allowed to judge himself. Whether the institution is on the whole better or worse now than in July, 1935, I ought not to say. But I believe it is not worse. My friends claim it is better. Your romantic affection will perhaps cause you to grant the claim.

Knowingly or by design I have not injured the University even in the smallest matter. I have, waking or asleep, cherished it as a friend's trust.

For your part you gave me the fullest confidence. You upheld my decisions, you endorsed my judgements, you accepted my recommendations in the most unhesitating manner. Such treatment, suggesting no trace of superiority or inferiority of status, but based on mutual co-operation and support, I enjoyed as Agent in South Africa at the hands of Lord Irwin and Sir Muhammad Habibullah. On any other terms I should have felt office an intolerable and humiliating yoke. You are one of the few people who can, when they choose, treat their agent as though he were, not a receiver, but a conferrer, of favour. In saying this, believe me I am not flattering you. Nor am I stating

<sup>1</sup> This letter was written at the end of Mr Sastri's first term as Vice-Chancellor. He resigned after two years of his second term, pleading age and infirmity.

the experience of all that work with or under you. It is my personal feeling towards you which I record.

To thank you for unbounded trust is not the whole of the story. My conveniences and comforts have been your study from the beginning, and I have been receiving without break or hesitation an allowance worthy of a prince. Above all, in your personal behaviour, you have shown a deference of manner and solicitude for my susceptibilities which have left me speechless with gratitude and frequently caused me embarrassment.

Is it a wonder that I lay down the Vice-Chancellor's rank and office with regret? The duties and responsibilities, the buildings, the staff and the students, these have in their several ways become a part of my life, and I shall miss them sorely in my isolation. From my heart I wish that things would be so shaped for them that they would not miss me at all.

Lest you should feel the slightest delicacy in the matter of my succession, I beg you in all sincerity to feel absolutely free in your choice. Of course you are absolutely free without my saying so. What I mean is, you need not be under any constraint as to my personal feelings, you may be sure that I am anxious only for the well-being of the University and that you will please me most to think, first, second and last, of its interests to the exclusion of every smaller consideration.

So then I return your trust into your hands.

With a brother's love as ever

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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ANNAMALAI UNIVERSITY

ANNAMALAINAGAR

1st August 1938

My dear Natarajan

When I find you expressing my thoughts I feel a strange satisfaction. This morning the satisfaction is so like pride. I hesitate to own it. But with you there is no risk in opening one's heart.

'The Governor's Role' is the heading of one of your paras in the I. S. R. of July 30th. I could sign my name below that para without much change. But I wish to underline the sentence "They at least observe truth though they may be moving away from non-violence." The Mahatma has seemed to me in recent pronouncements to disclose an essential disparity between the great ideas of truth and non-violence, the identity of which he proclaims as part of his creed. You have detected the flaw and nailed it.

I wish we were together and I could shake you by the hand vigorously. Patting your back would be better, but you are not boy enough any more. I am!

Rajaji shows the effects of overstrain. He must go slow. He has modelled himself closely on the Mahatma and will not take advice though he will listen to you with utmost courtesy. In an important detail, however, he is markedly unlike his model. He must pour his mind out on every occasion, great or small, and empty it clean of all ideas on the subject, scrappy, irrelevant, fanciful, inappropriate.

Parables and similes are his snare. He shouldn't go near them, for they presuppose a simple and unsophisticated atmosphere. Rajaji is a most subtle and deep thinker. So is Gandhi, but his success in putting away the trappings of modern civilisation is great and makes me marvel though I see, every now and then that it is far from complete. How much easier it is to strip the body than the mind!

Believe me, dear friend

Ever yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr D. V. GUNDAPPA

MYLAPORE

4th October 1938

My dear Gundappa

Born in 1869, I am only 69 now. That is, I have completed 69 years. When Sept. 22 comes round in 1939, I should be a septuagenarian, if . . . .

The world is going mad. I never was so perplexed in my life as now. Do I want peace or war? Peace. Then why am I not pleased? Because of the extinction (it will be that soon) of Czechoslovakia. Did I expect peace in a Hitler-ridden world without some iniquity? If I did, I was a fool. Much as I disliked Halifax when he said: 'Peace is at this juncture greater to the world than justice', I don't dislike him nearly so much now. Peace is something more tangible, at least in its negative aspects, than justice, far more clearly discernible. Who would sacrifice a clear tangible end for a mere abstraction which means different things to different nations and different

individuals? This peace, however, cannot last long. Some people would ask: "Since we must fight some day, why not now? it may be better now than tomorrow." The answer is that of the doctor in the case of the dying man. He can't say: "Since the patient is sure to die in three days, why not finish him now? So much bother is saved." The idea is, God's ways are inscrutable. Nothing is certain. If we gain time, who knows? Mankind may change its ways, the nations may learn the wisdom of peace, and all quarrels will yield to reason.

Let Chamberlain have the peace prize, and give a share of it to Daladier and Mussolini and Hitler himself. Benes is to have nothing but the world's pity and scorn.

My brain is now feeble and fitful in its work, and I daren't trust its verdict. But there will be a few more wars before the reign of peace begins. Then the earth and its peoples will be very different from what they are to-day.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO DINABANDHU C. F. ANDREWS

ANNAMALAINAGAR

3rd August 1939

My dear Charlie

A friend has just sent me a cutting of an article by you giving me great, too great praise. Your generosity is in inverse proportion to my desert. I wish I had words in which to convey my gratitude.

You dwell at length on what unfortunately is an error of fact. I can't erase it, however often I contradict it.

Now it has been attested on high authority, I fear its eternal life is guaranteed!

Gokhale never mentioned me for the headship of the Society.<sup>1</sup> Dr Deva in fact asked him when the end was approaching. He refused to tie the hands of the members. In this, I venture to think, he showed rare practical wisdom. To fetter the discretion of one's followers in such a vital matter is to imperil the institution that one hands over to them.

1 In a speech on the Gokhale Day (19th February) of 1923, Mr Sastri alluded to the 'statement now and again made that on his death-bed Mr Gokhale nominated him as successor', and said:—'Though reminded of the Society and entreated to state his wishes in regard to it he said nothing. Perhaps he retained to the last a misgiving that he had always had about me, that I had marked leanings to the other school of politics and was only an extremist in disguise. Perhaps, too, he remembered that Mr Gandhi was back in India and they had anxious talks about his joining the Society. But I feel sure, as sure as if he had told me, that his reticence on the subject was due to a deeper motive. He was aware how institutions like property often suffered from having to follow courses prescribed by dead men. He loved the Society like his own child and cherished it above all things. Its future was for long his greatest concern in life. Any other man would have given minute instructions as to its conduct after him. But he had greater wisdom and greater faith than most men; and left it to the judgement of his pupils, unhampered by the wishes of a dying master. He had done all he could for it and now he must part from it with complete resignation as he had parted a little while ago from his family. It was a moment of supreme Sanyasa such as crowns the lives of a few elect ones in this holy land, the final detachment from all that one held dear, the withdrawal of the soul of set purpose from its earthly attachments before the last release.'

Did you observe—so little escapes your eye—that Gunther in his new book describes me as an old friend of G.? He says nothing more. Why need he? I am content.

Affectionately yours  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr A. V. THAKKAR

ANNAMALAINAGAR

26th November 1939

My dear Thakkar Bapa

Allow an elder brother, though only by two months, to greet you on the public honour to be accorded to you on the 29th instant.<sup>1</sup> Gandhiji asked me whether I could be present at the great function but with two long journeys in prospect at about the same time, I had regretfully to decline. But be sure I am beside you. I yield to none in admiration of your unequalled work for the lowly and the suffering classes or in homage for the singleness of purpose and the high consecration that have marked all your undertakings. I must not claim more of your time or attention. Accept my profound affection and good wishes for many more years of service to suffering humanity.

Always in brotherly bonds of love

Yours  
V. S. SRINIVASAN

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1 The 71st birthday of Mr Thakkar.

To Mr S. R. BALASUBRAHMANYA AIYAR

SVAGATAM, MYLAPORE

25th July 1940

Dear Friend

How can you neglect me? I know you don't feel happy, trying to forget one who drew so much of your love. Write to me now and then. I not only expect it, I need it and need it sorely. Tell Natarajan to write too. And Venkittu's occasional writing will be a special joy to me. Love can subsist long on memory, but it is not wise nor necessary so to starve it. When it has no basis in self-interest or complicity in wrong-doing, it is nothing to be ashamed of. Don't deceive yourself and your sons by pretending that you will thrust yourselves where you are not welcome or give trouble to one who longs for complete rest. I want rest, but from labour, taxing thought and so on. From you, I look for pleasure, the sweet voice of affection, the solace of genuine friendship.

Imagine we are seated on the steps of the lake at Kanda Kumar or walking at my pace some distance from Kumarakshi or listening to Tiger Varadachariar's boat song. What are the things you would be saying to me? Can't you lure me by a few words to those happy scenes? You surely can. Try.

Let not the routine of the school submerge you. Defeat the malice of circumstance. Show that separation may cheat the eye but can't erase the memory.

G. A. Natesan has forced a book on me for review. It is the sort I fancy. "I Believe" is the title. Twenty-three persons make their confession to you. Believe me, since



I left you, this is the first book in English I mean to read. The Ramayanam engages me deeply. I find it an inexhaustible treasure house. At the same time so restful; no problems for you to solve, no anxieties to hagride you.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To DEWAN SIR MIRZA ISMAIL

MYLAPORE

29th July 1940

My dear Mirza

Please allow me to express my sympathy with you and His Highness's subjects in their anxiety and deep concern for his health. Their interests now more than ever before depend on his continued care and benign protection. Outside Mysore there are millions whose solicitude for his welfare is keen. For the curious conglomerate of States, there is an ever present need of a high and pure example, not only in well-conceived and well-preserved administration, but incarnated in a virtuous and high-minded Ruler. Mysore and His Highness are occupying this singular eminence and therefore rise to be objects of all-India pride and all-India prayer. For many years now I have been one of the most genuine well wishers of your State and the most enthusiastic admirers of your Maharajah. God preserve him long for Mysore and India!

Ever lovingly yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To DEWAN SIR MIRZA ISMAIL

MYLAPORE

9th August 1940

Dear Friend

How can the world be the same to you after the loss<sup>1</sup> as before it? The friendship between you was out of the common, I have always conceived it as belonging in part to the world of romance.

Desperate counsels may occur to you. I trust you won't harbour any such, but listen only to the clear voice of duty. So will you best please the man whose approbation was your greatest reward in life and whose love was your greatest blessing.

My best and most tender thoughts are with you.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

To PROFESSOR K. SWAMINATHAN

COIMBATORE

6th June 1941

My dear Sama

Is there need to invoke names where I am to get all the benefit of your proposal?<sup>2</sup> To read your letter one would think I am besieged by a crowd of suppliants to whose

1 The death of H. H. the Maharajah of Mysore.

2 Professor S. had requested Mr Sastri to write some discourses on Indian Philosophy and literature, and an autobiography.

petition I pay no heed. You desire to establish my *yasas*, to ensure my being read by generations of the young and blest by them. If I had the raging stuff of ambition within me, I should by now have taken you at your word and begun to plague you till you had put the project through,—or kicked me out of your door for a madcap. But you see I am hard to stir; the electricity hasn't been discovered that can galvanize me!

I have no philosophy in me of the academic variety. South African audiences gaped wonderingly as I told them of our famous monism. Bhishma and Sakuntala open to strangers worlds of romantic charm. Who in India would care to read of them? It would, coming out of my unbelieving pen, make the reader sick, if it did not make him angry.

The autobiography is not so obviously out of court. Time was when I would have run away from the idea as an outrageously immodest proposal. I realize the plea of virginity is no longer available. Alas, I have fallen. And to whom? You don't expect an old man to grow poetic over his senile amours. Yet, my dear Sama, believe me, this Tamil escapade<sup>1</sup> warms my blood with the genuine passion. It is awkward, stumbling and—don't I see?—ludicrous. But it possesses me for the time. I am oblivious of what the critical world says. What does it matter so long as I am thrilled?

If second childhood may lisp, let it lisp in the mother-tongue. But I must not wander.

1 Mr Sastri wrote some reminiscences in Tamil for the 'Swadesamitran'.

Aren't they a wee bit human in heaven? What a question? It is rank blasphemy. But I mean, when they sternly interrogate me on my vanity at seventy-two, to plead that my lapse is a mere peccadillo and cite precedents from the annals of Vishnu and Indra. I hope they have still the decency to blush.

An autobiography in English would leave me utterly naked and defenceless. I have not forgotten 'the ocean of mercy' and all that sort of thing. Would it avail one who has registered an oath in Chitragupta's book? and endorsed it solemnly?

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

Lo! as I sign, two rogues, a long one and a short one, leer at me round the corner. I am struck dumb, and they close on me with a bewitching smile.

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To Mr T. N. JAGADISAN

COIMBATORE

7th June 1941

My dear Jagadisan

\* \* \* \* \*

A few years ago I used to plague myself with examination of my past and contemplation of the great chasm between what might have been and what was. If Balfour and Mrs Besant had to lament their failures, where am I?

Now I have a solace, but you will be surprised, perhaps shocked, to know of it. What would it have signified to

the world, I ask, if I had realized my possibilities to the full?

True pessimism, you say. Stern reality, I rejoin.

Pray do not imagine I have a grievance against the world. I have none. On the contrary, the world has been kind; not only tolerant, but generous. A diffident, ungrasping man is generally at a disadvantage; but luck has been friendly to me. Good things have sought me, occasionally found me timid and hesitant. I have not actually run away from such opportunities; conscience-stricken and scared, I have sat up and done my duty. But I was never eager, not at all ambitious and sadly deficient in the quality of adventure. If I sat at the table of the mighty, I was content to eat what I needed. I did not shout for the viands and costly wines and gorge myself. To speak the truth, I was every moment weighed down by the feeling that I had strayed out of bounds. I never settled down where I was stationed, but sat on the edge of the chair, ready to vacate if stared at questioningly by any steward.

Conquerors must be made of sterner stuff.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr S. R. BALASUBRAHMANYA AIYAR

R. S. PURAM, COIMBATORE

23rd June 1941

My dear Balasubrahmanya Aiyar

A fine passage; brief but eloquent. I respond readily. The face, voice and hands were once near and both gave

and received an intimate thrill. Those mornings and those evenings will not return. We said good things, we thought high thoughts, we solved or tried to solve big problems. Our meetings began and ended in peace and mutual love. We harboured no ill-will, we coveted no unclean possessions, we killed no reputations. We taught and learned, read and enjoyed. Simple harmless occupations which, however, added silently to our wisdom.

Boats still ply on the river at Porto Novo, the moon is still reflected on the waters of the wayside channels around Chidambaram, Kanda Kumar Ghat is as charming and restful as ever. But do people get the joy out of them that we did? I sometimes doubt. Rural beauties are only for the blessed,—and alas, even for them only for a while. But they can be revived in the memory, even though it be the failing memory of an old man. Retrospect consoles. What if there be a tinge of regret with it? The sweetness is there still.

Now tell me are the dictionaries used as much as then? Do your sons call you to account as often as before? Perhaps they gave you up long ago. I would give much to know whether the impulse which started in 1937 is still at work or has exhausted itself.

Give my love to your boys and assure them it is as fresh as in the old days. I should love an occasional line from them but even that may be a tax on their patience, more honoured in the denial than in the payment! Be it so.

I meant as you may remember, to retire from the usual activities and the usual anxieties. But they have their roots too deep in my being. I am afraid my soul is their slave and there is no Lincoln to strike off its bonds.

Steel not your heart against me. Be hard on yourself but not on those that love you. Cheer up and laugh, long and loud. See how I have alliterated.

Affectionately yours

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr A. V. THAKKAR

R. S. PURAM, COIMBATORE

12th September 1941

My dear Thakkar

You will have seen my statement on Churchill's declaration. He is a powerful man, now all powerful and puffed up. India can tackle him, if she is united, practical-minded, long-sighted. Jinnah has tied himself up into a tangled knot. He is paralysed. Gandhiji can shake himself and strike a new line but he too for the moment is in perverse company and wedded, like the I.C.S. of old time, to prestige and consistency. These are the shibboleths of party but the ruin of the nation. He can't give up his morals and Ahimsa, but he can stand aside and give a chance to an alternative policy. Stark abdication, publicly announced, may cause a panic and do terrible harm. But acquiescence in another line of approach is feasible. He is aware of it. However, I am impotent and have no business to advise. So I shut up. Love.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To Mr T. N. JAGADISAN

POONA

February 1942

My dear Jagadisan

\* \* \* \* \*

Sir Ali Imam and his brother Hasan Imam came into political prominence early in life. Both were barristers and married non-Moslem wives. They kept open house, talked admirably, and endeared themselves as nationalists who raised the reputation of Bihar and kept it beyond the touch of Muslim separation. Both had more than a flavour of the theatrical in behaviour; Sir Ali was the more astute and skilful; Hasan was no doubt the more sincere and more patriotic. When the senior was made member of the Viceroy's Executive Council, he made a sensation by avowing himself a nationalist. The country went mad over him but when he laid down office after 5 (or 6?) years, there was not much to his credit. Govt. loth to see so young a man idle, translated him to the Patna bench; from there he jumped to the Bihar Executive Council. In the Muslim world his position was so high the Nizam wished to appropriate him. Unprecedentedly generous terms were offered, and Sir Ali took over the charge of Hyderabad to the boom of the press. Ability in that State has about the same chance as marbles in mud. Beyond the outline of a constitution which was published for general information, we knew nothing particular. All of a sudden, the Nizam put forward a claim for the rendition of Berar and appointed Sir Ali Imam as his plenipotentiary for negotiating this first-class political transaction with the authorities at Westminster. It was openly asserted that



Sir Ali had the spending of 30 lakhs for the purpose, besides salary, perquisites and establishment on an unheard of scale. Anyhow during 1922 and 1923 Sir Ali lived in the house that had been occupied by the ambassador of the U. S. A., and they said with scarcely less pomp. His European wife had died by the time and when I dined at his table, I was occasionally transported to heaven by the company and conversation of a Mussalman lady of striking beauty and charm. Indian dishes, Indian servants, Indian costume, but all in the most luxurious style; about 30 vegetarian preparations, host and hostess having graciously turned *baishnab* for the nonce. You heard nothing but the three voices and the inevitable clank of China. The waiters and secretaries moved about like automata, prompt but unobtrusive, understanding but dumb. You might have been at the table of royalty in ancient Egypt or medieval Arabia.

In such surroundings another person's enjoyment would have been unclouded. But I had Kenya weighing me down and a sickly conscience would stare every now and then into my face, as who should ask, "Is this a fit place for you?" whereupon a sense of guilty intrusion would overpower me and I felt like one who had just ignited the pyre of his beloved parent and immediately sat down to a feast of milk and honey.

One day, pressed thereto by earnest questioning, I narrated my woes to Sir Ali and Lady Imam. More attentive and more sympathetic hearing I could not wish for. In a few minutes I was the interested listener and Sir Ali poured into my ears the story of his costly but fruitless mission. He had entertained lavishly, he had

interviewed and been interviewed, he had argued in person and by memorials, he had proved his case to the satisfaction of all who had ears to hear and the wit to understand; but he was up against the dead wall of political grab and hold-fast. He had spent more than 10 lakhs; the Nizam, known to be excessively careful in expenditure, was beginning to ask questions, which boded a not-distant recall. What was he to do? He had lost patience and with it all diplomatic courtesy. There was his parthian shot! He gave me a copy of his last appeal; it was a remonstrance in language not known to the decorous ears of the political department.

To cut a long story short. He was winding up when my Kenya bubble burst. I swore I must give tongue to my grief and must be heard by as many influential people as possible. Here was an excellent opportunity for him. "We shall be revenged jointly" he said. "I shall be host, you will be my guest. I'll ask a thousand people to tea. I'll request you at the end to say *a few words*. But let them be many, charge them with your anger and feeling of outraged empire citizenship, let them bite and sting and burn."

You know the rest.

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

Sir Ali returned the unspent portion of his 30 lakhs to the Nizam and after a short period of office to save appearances, retired to his Patna home. He did not survive this failure long.

## OPEN LETTERS

[Dated 24th October 1943]

To Mr A. L. AMERY

Dear Mr Amery

Was your speech at the farewell to our new Viceroy meant as a specific Instrument of Instructions? If so, it was both misconceived and unhelpful. You told him in effect that he was not to take the initiative in resolving the deadlock, but wait till the Congress High Command ate the humble pie and withdrew their offending resolution. Was it right to tie him down to the present doing-nothing policy? Should he not be free to try a new approach to the problem? We trust he will not be long in perceiving that your instructions are more honoured in the breach than in the observance. The war-guilt clause, it is now generally admitted, was not the wisest part of the Peace Treaty of 1920. Men of honour do not require men of honour to do public penance; they trust the new facts to teach the necessary lesson. The war and the internal situation of India unfold promising phases. In 1930 I pleaded at the Round Table Conference for honourable parley with those of another political faith whom the logic of events had proved wrong. Let me perform a similar office now and invite your compatriots and you not to heed the promptings of passion but to walk in the footsteps of the noble statesman who in similar circumstances in the last century proclaimed "No, I will not govern in anger." Verbal recantation is not of the essence of a changed outlook. The failure of the Congress policy is writ large on

the face of affairs. None will deny it. When Mr Churchill recently made a pilgrimage to Moscow, did he wear sackcloth and ashes? When he consented to the inclusion of the right of secession in the Cripps scheme, did he make open confession of previous unwisdom? When Lord Linlithgow paid belated homage the other day to the ideal of Indian unity, did he sit on the stool of repentance and withdraw in set terms the liberum veto that his declaration of August, 1940, had gratuitously conferred on the head of the Muslim League? Demand not of our revered leaders that they stand with tears in their eyes at the gates of the Viceroy's palace and strike penitential palms on aching cheeks. Play the part of the magnanimous victor and the healing statesman. Do not, I adjure you, sow dragon's teeth on the ancient and hallowed soil of this country.

Yours sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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To H. E. THE VICEROY

Your Excellency

My heart misgives as I think of the many delicate and intricate tasks that await you. We have been assured of your resolution, independence of judgement and liberal outlook. That is satisfactory, but not sufficient. Your training must have exalted obedience high above all other virtues and made you impatient of the slowness and caution of diplomacy and the compromises of parliamentary negotiation. Besides, the Indian politician's attitude suspicious and soured by generations of deferred

hope, may be a puzzle and soon become your despair. Can you look beyond the narrow circle of official advisers and invite to your aid the patriotism of the land, which now is held at arm's length, because it will not neglect Indian honour and Indian welfare? Can you see, in men and women branded as disloyal, eager colleagues in the service of India and of the Empire? Anxious eyes and ears from every corner will be directed towards New Delhi to find out whether you "weigh well" and not merely "maxwell." The great desideratum is a bold measure of appeasement, not likely to appear in the firmament of official possibility, to be pushed forward to its consummation in the faith that generous confidence begets generous confidence. Government by Section 93 must end and the legislatures must be restored to their normal function. As nearly as may be consistent with the requirements of the war, the Centre must be endowed with the authority and prestige that betoken in the eyes of the world the early attainment of Dominionhood, so that our representatives may hold up their heads, whether at the Imperial Conference or at the World's Peace Conference, as the recognised equals of the representatives of Great Britain, Canada, Australia and South Africa. This is a change of great magnitude and will require unintermittent and devoted labour, even if begun tomorrow. And it must be begun tomorrow. For the sun of armistice may suddenly burst through the cloud of war, brightening the planet and calling upon the nations to tackle the hundred problems of peace.

I do not forget the communal difficulty; how can I? Thousands on the one side and thousands on the

other are equally crazy and determined to use every means to secure their wish. Arbitration promises the only feasible and the only honourable way out. If Government will bring their earnest mediation and their enormous influence to bear, they have a good chance of securing agreement. My hope is strong. What the Great Powers submit to in the interest of peace, no section of a country's population dare reject. "If this will not suffice, it must appear that malice bears down truth." Twice within the experience of the present generation, once in Kenya and once in Northern Ireland, have the British authorities at Westminster been deflected from the right course by threat of armed resistance by a truculent minority. Let not the ignominy happen a third time. Millions will pray devoutly for the success of Your Excellency's effort. If you pull arbitration through and settle this problem, you will have secured a victory in the realm of civil affairs which any conqueror in history, living or dead, may envy.

I will ask leave to say another word. The Secretary of State has declared his fear that British Parliamentary democracy may not suit India and advised us to invent a new type of popular government for ourselves. I am not known to be an uncharitable critic; but I find it hard to believe that he can be serious. What Britain does not know and has not tried, she cannot conscientiously recommend to a people less experienced or guide them in operating it. For a century and a half we have studied British institutions and admired them. When Mr Montagu framed his proposals and published them for criticism in

India, some of us would have preferred an irremovable executive. I was among these. But he was all for the system of ins and outs and the majority of our leaders were attracted by the excitement and struggle incidental to recurring trials of parliamentary skill and strategy. For twenty years and more we have practised it and become used to it. To pronounce us unfit now and send us about in quest of another plan is to hold up things indefinitely, to strew the land with apples of discord and create such confusion as to imperil the constitutional progress so far achieved. If it was intended to punish us for venturing to look forward to further progress in the same direction, Mr Amery's advice would become intelligible. Before we become much older, however, his attempt will encounter the fate of Canute's command to the sea. Not in these days can a nation's freedom be denied or delayed with impunity.

Yours sincerely

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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TO MAHATMA GANDHI

Dear Mahatma

I pen these words in anguish. The days are hard for our motherland. Fain would I know how you feel so that no random words of mine might add to the wretchedness and desolation which fill every minute of your life. Bear with me once more. At similar crises before, it has been my unenviable lot to address you with the harshness of unheeding truth but in accents of love. The people of

India, for whom you have slaved these thirty years as no one has done, lie prostrate in the deadly grasp of hunger, destitution and stark despair. A dismal sense of frustration oppresses them like a nightmare. Their trust in you, however, is the same, if possible, tenderer and purer for your sufferings and sorrows. Promising plans are promising only so far as you may work them out. Proposals from any quarter are canvassed, but only so long as the execution stage is not reached; then they ask for you and speculation stops. Officials in their way and for their reasons, unofficials in their way and for their reasons, all alike turn to you. Only on half a dozen occasions have human hearts yielded themselves up in such complete thrall to one without birth, beauty of form, possessions, force of arms or honours to distribute. Every true Indian is proud that he can call you his fellow-countryman, and those that you have honoured with your friendship are among the blessed ones of their generation. Being one of these, I have used my privileged position now and then to remonstrate against the way you have allowed the doctrine of "ahimsa," of which you are the unanointed apostle, to be muddled in its application to the work of the Congress. Your answer is that you always meant to employ it in the furtherance of national aims and could not help the lapses. You add too, with humility all your own, that you are not a saint strayed among politicians, but a politician appearing like a saint and not to be judged by the highest standards. I am, however, unreconciled and own to a feeling of grief that one so near the summit of purity should not reach it. Dear brother, an opportunity has come, the like of which never was and never will be for



generations. At the ensuing Peace Conference, which may meet sooner than most people expect, the afflicted nations will seek ardently for brave and honoured advocates of justice, equality and brotherhood without distinction of race, colour or religion. You must be there. Who, if not you? War must be banished for ever from the earth and all possibility of its recurrence provided against so far as it can be provided against by human fore-sight. Would you be missing on that supreme occasion? No, a thousand times No. Pacifism, non-violence, *ahimsa*—whenever and wherever these words are pronounced, the name of Gandhi will occur to the minds of people all over the earth. What should keep you from bearing irrefragable witness to the truth that you have ever cherished in your heart, the truth that must resound through the ages when your body has perished? After several humiliations due to association with earthly causes, the hour of exaltation approaches you. I see you, Great Soul, in a vision of glory, go up the Mount of Expectancy of a weary, waiting world, raise high the right hand of blessing, and solemnly utter the word which is in all hearts and which comes full of hope and full of meaning from your inspired lips.

Come, then, bestir yourself. Not a day should be lost. There is so much to do before civilised administration can be restored and competent authorities in the provinces and at the Centre can be formed with national aims and appropriate means for the choice of delegates through whom the soul of India can speak to the rest of the world. Don't say you are not free. You can be free, if you but realise that you are waited for. Your last movement has not

borne the fruit that you wished. Admit what everybody sees. No hesitation need be felt in recognising facts. You yield, no doubt. But you yield to Fate and not to man. Stoop and conquer. Many a hero before you has done so and many a hero after you will do so. Let us consult the Ramayana, a book which we revere alike. It counsels against the single aim and the single strategy. A good general should vary them. These are the words of Hanuman, whose aid all Hindus invoke before beginning great enterprises:

“ No single plan is adequate to achieve even a small aim. Only he can succeed in his purpose who adopts different plans in different circumstances.”

Yours affectionately

V. S. SRINIVASAN

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